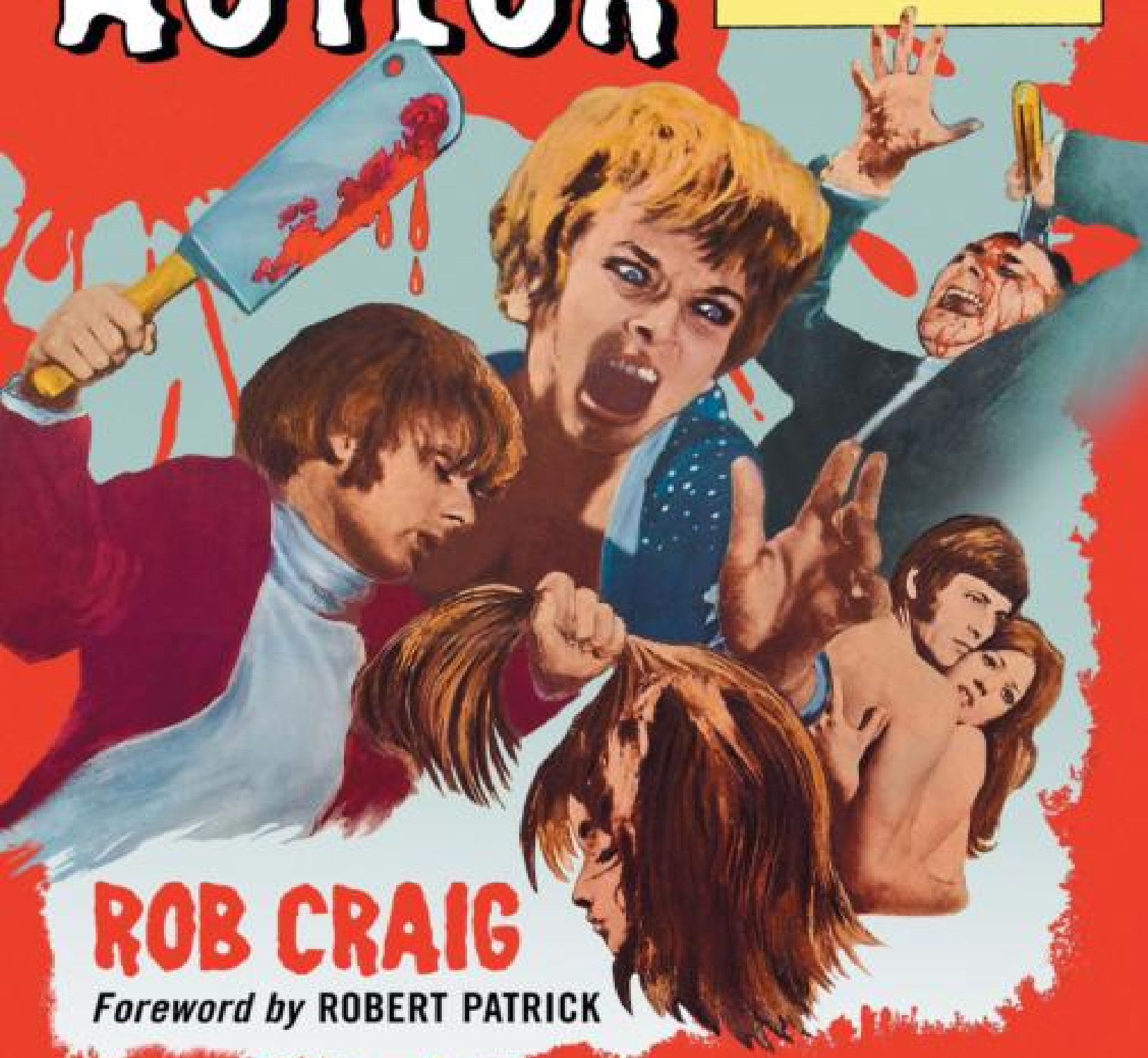
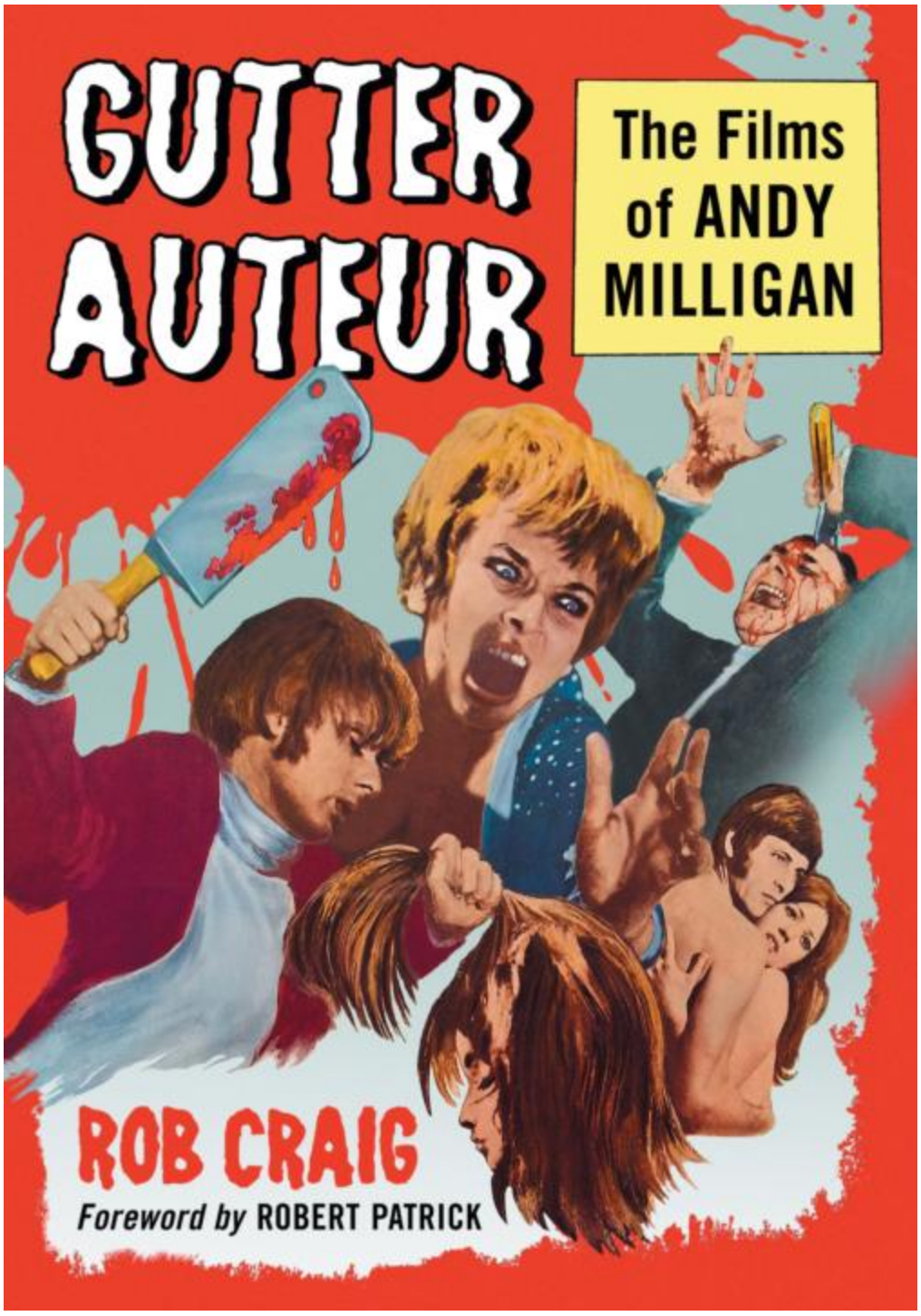
GUTTER AUTEUR

The Films of ANDY MILLIGAN



ROB CRAIG

Foreword by ROBERT PATRICK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The Films of Andy Milligan

Rob Craig

Foreword by Robert Patrick

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On the cover: Poster art from the 1970 film *Bloodthirsty Butchers*

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For Burt

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Foreword

by Robert Patrick

The first moment I entered the Caffe Cino, on the afternoon of September 14, 1961, Andy Milligan was rehearsing with the Cino's star actor, Neil Flanagan, a scene from The Importance of Being Earnest, to be done at an uptown theatre called the Cubiculo. Andy (and Neil) worked at many such theatres around town, places without much character or personality, but they kept coming back to the Cino, where the whole idea of Off Off Broadway or "Underground" Theatre was forming. Neil adjusted better than Andy did to the revolution around them. Especially, Andy was upset by openly gay plays like Lanford Wilson's The Madness of Lady Bright, for acting in which Neil won a well-deserved "Obie" award from The Village Voice. Oddly, Andy's very first movie, Vapors, was from a script about gay men at the baths written by the Cino's incredibly elegant waitress, Hope Stansbury. After that, all the gay men in Andy's movies or plays were drag queens, "shriekers," "pansies," or "bitches." I think a bitter maladjustment to being gay was at the core of much of Andy's life. In personal encounters, I found Andy professional, paranoid, distrustful, angry, a bit of a control freak, and, toward the end, pathetic.

Professional: when the evening dress an actress brought to the Cino for my play New Works was insufficiently stylish, couturier Andy, who was hanging about because his friend Neil was directing, literally grabbed a swatch of bold print fabric from his satchel, whipped it around the actress, and with only a couple of safety pins, sent her onstage looking fit for Vogue! He wouldn't so much as let me thank him.

Paranoid: once, sitting in the light booth at the Cino chatting with Andy, I mentioned that I had found one of his film scripts rather operatic and would like to try putting it onstage. He turned scarlet-faced, and, as if I had

insulted rather than complimented his work, screamed, "You all hate my movies! My movies are good! They offer sexual release!" and stormed out.

Distrustful: I once dropped in at a strange little theatre Andy briefly had at 4th Street and Bowery. It was near Easter and he said he had lost his Easter play and needed one. I lived a few blocks away and said I had a suitable one and would be back with it. When I got back, he had given another playwright the date. When I asked why, he said, "I thought you were lying and wouldn't come back."

Angry: once I found myself alone with Andy and a very handsome Cino actor in an apartment (I can't recall if it was Andy's or the actor's). The mood was sexual, which was fine with me, but before anything overt happened, Andy revealed flatly that he was "into S&M." I said, genially enough, that I wasn't. He became clench-faced and furious and more or less ordered me out.

Controlling: Andy once asked me to write a film script for one of his "sexploitation" features. I came up with a plot that pleased him. He gave me a hundred dollars and told me, "Don't write little connecting scenes like phone calls or cab rides. They cost as much to shoot as a scene." So I wrote a movie that was just four long party scenes. He called me and said it wouldn't do-because it had no "little connecting scenes like phone calls or cab rides!" I swear he used those same words. I gave him back the money. I could never deal with that kind of control mania.

Pathetic: Towards the end, Andy's productions, whether original film scripts or the classics he continued to do on stage, became bewilderingly personal and/or bewilderingly careless. The last play I saw at his theatre was some Shaw piece. The floor was so dusty the actors were trailed by clouds everywhere they went, and the period costumes so ill-maintained, they were literally tearing and slipping off of the players during the show.

I know he was at that point also producing rather bizarre original plays by at least two writers who also happened to be Irish Catholics. I always felt that point of origin was at the heart of much of Andy's life and work, but I

am informed that Andy was in fact from a Lutheran background. I don't know anything about Lutherans, and I feel now that I never knew enough about dear Andy.

Robert Patrick has seen hundreds of productions of his plays, from The Haunted Host at the Gaffe Cino in 1964 to Hollywood at Sunset in California in 2009. His The Trial of Socrates was the first gay play produced by the city of New York. He has written a novel, Temple Slave, and an autobiography, Fil Moi or Narcissus in the Dark.

Preface

I first encountered the films of Andy Milligan on a bleak, snowy day in mid-November 1975, when I ventured into Manhattan to finally catch the notorious The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, still in first-run release at the Lyric, a Times Square grindhouse. The co-feature was a salaciously-titled obscurity called Torture Dungeon, and curiosity alone dictated that I experience this film as well. Quite impressed with the coherence and filmic aptitude of Tobe Hooper's masterpiece, which to me seemed like a postmodern incarnation of the carefully calculated shock aesthetic of Hitchcock, I naively anticipated a similar response to the second feature.

As the worn and scratchy print of Torture Dungeon unspooled, my accumulated wisdom regarding what a film should look like was completely undermined. An obviously unschooled, nervous hand-held camera prowled barren beaches and slap-dash, homemade sets, carelessly zooming in on halfway-house thespians wearing bizarre, threadbare costumes, spouting inane mock-Shakespearean dialogue rendered almost indecipherable via conspicuously bad mitring, and the whole thing blown up so large that the film frame looked more like an impressionist painting than a real movie.

I couldn't believe my eyes, in the best sense of the term. This wasn't like watching a professional movie - this was like watching amateur theatrics at an insane asylum, filmed by an inmate with a home movie camera. This ostensibly "period" melodrama was filmed on an obviously minuscule budget, and seemed at first glance to be influenced by both the underground film and experimental theater genres. The confusing, tedious and convoluted plot awkwardly followed a corrupt royalty which wished to obtain power to the throne by manipulating the peasantry. To achieve this, a hooded figure committed a series of gruesome dismemberments on various enemies of the state, acts which were dutifully (if carelessly) filmed. But the absurd plot and cartoonish gore only added to my enjoyment of the film,

which exerted a profound visceral hold on me -I felt as if I was witnessing a religious painting from the 15th century come to diabolical life.

Added to the delirious aesthetic barbarism of Torture Dungeon, I also began to absorb some of Andy Milligan's philosophy, which seemed to center on deviant sex, endless arguing, and the complete moral collapse of the community. The universe of Milligan, I would soon learn, was a grim, despairing, even deranged one, wherein pitiable, mentally unstable characters would lust after each other, only to mourn their unholy transgressions at some later date. Meanwhile, blood relatives spit venom at each other, cursing their very existence, and often planning their violent demise. The very dark heart of Milligan's world appealed to me then, as it does now, as an essentially accurate, if unflattering, portrayal of the human experience, which unerringly favors hate over love, antipathy over empathy, violence over kindness-for as one of the characters in Torture Dungeon blithely observes, "We're all beasts by nature."

This was my initiation into the theatrical Andy Milligan experience, and I submit that no sentient being could have been unmoved by it. Even the rough and rowdy grindhouse audience at the Lyric, which had been duly assaulted by The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, was even more unnerved by the primitive, confrontational aesthetic of Torture Dungeon, which made Massacre in comparison look like the slickest movie ever made. There were gales of laughter, moments of stunned silence, and acrimonious shouting at the screen in an effort to understand or harness this bizarre assault on the senses. After this indelible encounter with what I would later call "filmbrut," I called a good friend on a nearby pay phone, and exclaimed, "I just saw the greatest movie ever made!" A naive statement in retrospect, but correctly expressing my feelings at the time, it underscores the impact that Milligan had on a first-time viewer.

Needless to say, I became a devotee of the films of Andy Milligan from that point onward, and eventually managed to see several more of his amazing micro-budget epics on the big screen. Another memorable encounter with Milligan was seeing his extraordinary The Ghastly Ones in the wee hours of the morning, at the tail end of a "Dusk to Dawn

Horrorthon" at the Pix Drive-In in Bridgeport, Connecticut, circa 1980. As the unannounced film flooded the immense drive-in screen, a queerly-dressed young couple cavorted through some barren meadowland before being hacked to pieces by a hunchbacked executioner, and an eerie sense of familiarity engaged me. As I watched the grainy, shaky image, rendered almost completely red by the fading of the Eastmancolor print, it dawned on me that I had fortuitously stumbled on yet another masterwork by my new cinema hero.

The Ghastly Ones, which might be called a remake of "The Old Dark House" as filtered through the ruins of the Sexual Revolution was, if possible, even more angry and pessimistic than Torture Dungeon. The premise was simplicity itself - all the protagonists had to do in order to inherit a fortune was to get along for several days. Alas, in Milligan's world as in ours, this goal remained an elusive phantom, and by film's end, none were left alive but the servants, whose job seemed to be to mop up after yet another of humanity's bumbling attempts to live in harmony. As in Torture Dungeon, the frequent bloodletting in The Ghastly Ones had an authentic, visceral quality completely lacking in the slick, contrived, ultimately sterile gore films of Herschell Gordon Lewis, George Romero, Lucio Fulci, et al. For all its threadbare theatricality, Milligan's gore looked, for all intents and purposes, authentic - like watching a snuff film. Perhaps in league with the low-resolution of the film and the eternally shaky eye of the cameraman (invariably Milligan himself), death in a Milligan film looked like a home movie chronicle of a real atrocity, and thus had an impact far greater than the studied theatrical gimmicks of the aforementioned pretenders to the gore film throne.

Around this same time, I stumbled upon an amazing document which reinforced my belief that some of the most interesting films in the world were unspooling, unnoticed by the world at large, in the grindhouse and drive-in ghetto. Bill Landis' Sleazoid Express, a self-published xeroxed newsletter which chronicled the comings and goings of all stripe of fringe independent film in the Times Square area, became my bible for many years. Although I was able to catch some of these films when they eventually wound their way to the suburban drive-in, many more remained

elusive to me, and I experienced them only vicariously, through Landis' impeccable reviews. Even better, in several issues, Landis sung the praises of Andy Milligan and his amazing films, and I knew I had found a kindred spirit.

Soon, the home video boom was on, and among the first films I procured from sellers who specialized in fringe cinema were Milligan titles such as Torture Dungeon, Bloodthirsty Butchers and The Ghastly Ones. Having these beloved films on video to enjoy at my leisure was a luxury I admittedly enjoyed, but I soon became aware that the compression of a Milligan film onto a tiny TV screen had the tendency to tame or water down the film, in effect to imprison its robust, angry spirit. I then realized that Milligan had actually designed his tiny little 16mm wonders for the big screen, which made me admire him even more, and made those rare theatrical screenings all the more precious.

Looking over Milligan's canon in retrospect, I see now that what also attracted me originally to Torture Dungeon and The Ghastly Ones, aside from their refreshing aesthetic originality, was a remarkably well-articulated and consistent ideology which haunted every film throughout Milligan's long, bittersweet career. Milligan seemed obsessed with the wages of sin, and although his cultural brethren were mounting sexploitation films, and later horror films, which seemed to revel in the glories of the then-rampant, so-called "Sexual Revolution," Milligan took great pains to state that casual sex, in fact pretty much all sex, was sinful and vile, worthy of harsh and vengeful punishment from a disgusted god. Sex, often of a lustful and/or deviant nature, appears in abundance in the films of Andy Milligan, and just as often the perpetrators of this basest of acts is punished for their sins, always through personal anguish, often through societal judgment which ends in gruesome death.

One could easily dismiss this loathing of carnal knowledge as the knee-jerk reaction of a sexual prude, but in Milligan's case his distaste for the heterosexual coital act comes from a distinct philosophy, for he knew that sex between male and female is the primary force which perpetuates the noxious human race, and imprisons the newborn soul into that most reviled

of social institutions in the Milligan universe: the family. A malevolent family unit is the centerpiece of virtually all of Milligan's extant films (and likely feature prominently in the lost sexploitation films). The "blood red rose" is the centerpiece of many of Milligan's familial living spaces, an emblem which eerily symbolizes the family's perceived charm, its superficially beautiful "face," which but hides the danger, violence and rampant carnality which invariably resides inside the thorn-filled creation.

The films of Andy Milligan fit awkwardly, if at all, into the mainstream grindhouse film scene of the day- even contemporary observers noted the idiosyncratic peculiarity of a Milligan film when placed next to "normal" independent film product. His typical film is a most "odd duck," consisting of equal parts mainstream sexploitation aesthetics, high dramatic pretensions of theatrical avant-garde, and experimental film techniques of cinema underground. The result is a body of work from a person with few peers and fewer imitators, who stands as a prime example of the currently-deprecated yet still viable "auteur theory," a fiercely independent filmmaker toiling virtually alone to make very "personal" films with an identifiable signature, against formidable economic and personal odds.

I am writing this book as the fan of an artist whom I believe deserves a much wider, more serious audience than he can currently claim. I believe that the films of Andy Milligan are as important as the films of Andy Warhol, Paul Morrissey, Kenneth Anger or Curtis Harrington, and as worthy of serious critical study. Hopefully this modest volume will encourage a discussion of Milligan as one of the most original independent filmmakers of his time, an artist who almost singlehandedly created an identifiable, and largely inimitable aesthetic, based on the merging of avant-garde theatrical experiment with various underground filmmaking techniques, creating a series of films which are pure, bold and fascinating, and arguably unlike any other films ever made.

Introduction

Andy Milligan is one of America's most unusual, and least discussed, independent filmmakers. In a career covering four decades, Milligan created more than two dozen feature films with indelible narrative weight and a highly distinctive aesthetic. While Milligan is lauded by fans of cheap horror films, usually for the wrong reasons, the utter originality of Milligan's canon is lost on the public at large. Perhaps the main reason for Milligan's undeserved obscurity is the fact that his films were relatively without peer, and thus fell through the cracks of any definable film category. His sexploitation films were aesthetically daring in a way that made them virtually synonymous with the cinema verite movement of the day, but their ribald and licentious subject matter relegated them to the grindhouse ghetto, where they were released, enjoyed, and quickly forgotten, by and large lost to the ages. Milligan's better-known horror films, with their minuscule budgets and Victorian conceits, also failed to align themselves with the traditional horror genre of the day, and as most if not all of them were unreleasable to television due to their highly-sexualized content, they fell by the wayside until picked up, almost begrudgingly, by the home video marketplace.

Milligan seemed always to have one foot in the experimental/underground film aesthetic, and the other in the commercial grindhouse cinema, and his films, a fascinating amalgam of both cultures, exist as an "odd duck" canon, eluding easy categorization. Also, Milligan appears to have been either a dyed-in-the-wool masochist, or at least a very bad businessperson - throughout his career he made terrible deals with unscrupulous producers and distributors, and crafted his beautiful little mini-epics on the most extraordinary of budgets, including several purportedly made for less than $10,000. In almost all cases, Milligan sold the rights to the films to the sponsor, so in the end was left with nothing but memories of his prodigious output, along with the occasional pilfered print of one of his favorite productions.

From extant publicity materials and personal remembrances, it would appear that Milligan's sexploitation films were among the most avant-garde of their day, certainly for the commercial cinema marketplace. They were daring and frank, and boldly tackled current social issues, including polyfidelity, same-sex relationships, sado-masochistic sexual games, abortion and the Pill, among other concerns of the then-raging Sexual Revolution. In addition, Milligan peppered these films with strong language and liberal nudity to punctuate their raw timeliness. As for the horror films, Milligan often fashioned them as lurid Victorian melodramas where sexual sinners were punished for their transgressions, usually via a violent death. It is almost as if Milligan's horror films, with their arch sexual conservatism, were a response to his more liberal sexploitation films (although having few, if any of the sexploitation films to analyze, it would be presumptuous to make this comparison).

As a gay man, Andy Milligan addressed his sexuality in his films, albeit obliquely. There is often a gay character featured at least peripherally in the films, and in certain cases, homosexuality stands front and center in the scenario. However, Milligan never used his films as a soapbox to champion gay rights or any other such socio-political nonsense -his approach to the whole issue can best be described as ambivalent, perhaps even critical. Yet the mercurial nature of sexual roles, and their always-shifting power dynamics, are integral to virtually all of Milligan's films. As well, Milligan liked to toy around with sexual ambiguity, and several of his films feature cross-dressing and/or transvestite performances, which at that time existed only in the overvalued Warholian underground film movement.

Although many films within both the sexploitation and "extreme horror" genres which contain most of Milligan's output get away with the barest of scenarios in order to achieve their primary goal, which is the manipulation of the audience for an hour or so with sexual or horrific thrills, respectively, Milligan always insisted on crafting a fully-annotated script for his melodramas, in order to create complicated, even confusing narratives which the audience was invited to follow -that the average audience member could or would not follow a film's somewhat convoluted plotline, with its inevitable twist ending, was immaterial -the bounty of narrative

import was there for the viewer to absorb, if so inclined. As rich as the films of Andy Milligan are in storyline, they are as well graced with memorable performances from both professionals and nonprofessionals, who voice Milligan's words with a veracity and authenticness which greatly enhances the production. As Milligan had worked for a time at a popular New York underground theater, he brought with him not only much of the theatrical underground aesthetic, but also several performers who would grace a Milligan production with their unique thespian skills.

Finally, Andy Milligan managed to fashion, virtually alone, his own style which distilled equal parts of the cinema verite documentary film movement, and the quirky theatrics of the New York experimental theater phenomenon. The magnificent alchemical mixture of these two ostensibly antithetical disciplines created a wild, visceral style, a sort of "ubermelodrama" in which fantastical narrative happenings seemed somehow nonetheless anchored in grim reality, in almost a quasi-documentary way. A detractor once decried a Milligan film as looking like "a home movie from Bedlam," but the caustic remark may not be far off the mark, for Milligan's best work does look like the diabolical, amateur chronicling of a dysfunctional family at their moment of complete disintegration. The best Milligan films contain this "hyper-reality" in abundance, which eerily foreshadowed the noxious "Reality TV" genre which occurred decades later, a cynical production style which appropriated the superficial look of cinema verite photography to lend an incredulous authenticity to highly-scripted "real situations," resulting in a wildly manipulated, unconvincing version of corporate-sponsored "reality."

Yet Milligan was no corporate hack - he was an iconoclast in the best sense of the word, creating most of his miraculous feature films almost singlehandedly - and his extant legacy is all the more precious for that. Although both fans and detractors may grimace at the notion, it is as artist that Milligan shines most brightly, and his works, seen as modern film art, become fresh and vital and important. Milligan's personal story is tragic, an almost cliche portrait of the "starving artist," yet his story ultimately has a happy ending, for at least some of his works were saved from the whims of nefarious film brokers, and exist today to be enjoyed and discussed.

For all their provocative, even incendiary, activity, we may find that the films of Andy Milligan are ultimately conservative, in that sexual transgression is invariably punished by a vengeful society and/or god figure. Yet this reactionary (or self-loathing) perspective towards sex, a most cynical opinion on the "free love" movement of the day, is part of what make the films so much more timeless and interesting than the majority of their commercial counterparts. There is a consistent, if pessimistic philosophy to the films of Milligan, a grim assessment of humankind which strikes at the very heart of modern liberalism, and provides a damning edict against society's most cherished institution.

Although Milligan's films often wallow in the gutter of human existence, primarily meditating on the living hell of the social outcast and the sexual deviate, there is in contrast a shining, if elusive morality to be attained by those protagonists strong and fortunate enough to escape all traps set by a noxious social structure, which always threaten to drown the individual into its stifling conformist regime, often through the lure of sex. Many of Milligan's characters are pathetic weaklings, especially in the area of human relations, and yet these same characters often exhibit a grace and nobility which largely counterpoints their often-fatal flaws.

In sum, Milligan seemed alternately amused and despairing over the sorry plight of what he inarguably considered the failed human species, a gaggle of impulsive mammals who seemed unable or unwilling to act correctly, even when they knew better, and knew that their present course of action was certain death. This abiding moral judgment, and not merely the gore, nudity or insane histrionics, is what makes the films of Andy Milligan so powerful even today, and it is this extraordinary power of moral condemnation which we will attempt to articulate and analyze in this brief study.*

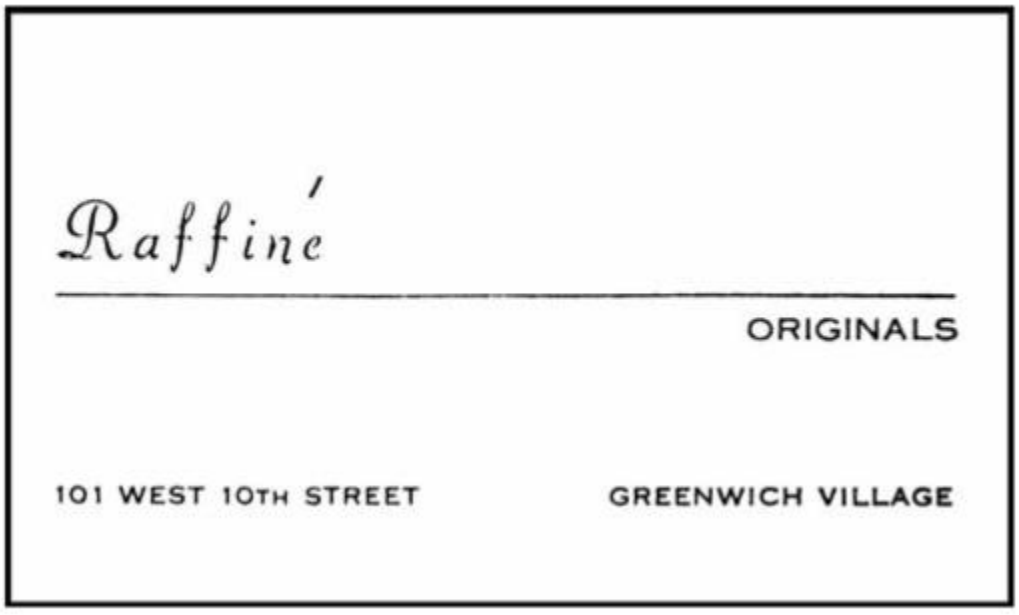
1

Birth of a Misanthrope

Andrew Jackson Milligan was born in 1929 in Saint Paul, Minnesota, during one of the coldest winters on record.' His father was in the military, and at some point married a woman he met on the bus. The sordid details of Milligan's traumatic upbringing is arduously chronicled, often in Milligan's own words, in Jimmy McDonough's biography, The Ghastly Ones: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (2001, A Cappella Press). The story is a harrowing one, not for the faint-hearted, as Milligan and his sister Louise were targets of the demented rage of their alcoholic mother, left entirely unprotected by a criminally passive father who apparently adored his wife and refused to acknowledge any shortcomings.2 Added to this hotbed of abuse was Milligan's training in a German Lutheran school, where frequent corporal punishment was the order of the day.'

At eighteen, Milligan joined the Navy, and it was here where he was first able to experience some freedom from the harsh yoke of parental authority - and also where he was able to indulge his emerging homosexual side, meeting fellow travelers such as Jack Larson, Tab Hunter and Kenneth Anger during his California sojourn.' Following his stint in the military, Milligan went to New York, where he tried his hand as a stage and television actor, a puppeteer, and even a night club performer.' After working for a costume-maker in New Jersey, Milligan discovered he had a knack for clothing design and managed to come up with the funds to open his own dress shop on Madison Avenue, which he dubbed The Ad Lib.' The success of this first business venture lead Milligan to relocate several times, and The Ad Lib eventually morphed into the infamous dress shop (and dressmaker) known as "Raffine."'

It was when The Ad Lib was located on 4th Street, in the heart of Greenwich Village, that Milligan bumped into an aspiring producer named Joe Cino, who ran a little coffee shop/theater nearby, and the two hit it off. Milligan soon became an essential part of the legendary Caffe Cino, which is today considered the birthplace of the Off Broadway theatrical experience.' Joe Cino had opened his establishment in December of 1958, and the place soon became a popular hangout for all sorts of up-and-coming artists, as well as hangers-on and wannabes.9 Almost from its inception, the Caffe Cino was also a popular hangout for New York's intelligentsia, and among its visitors were acclaimed authors Carlos Clarens and Susan Sontag.10 The Cino was soon known as an important, even radical, establishment. As playwright Robert Patrick succinctly described the Cino: "This Ground Zero of the 1960s was a coffeehouse, a theater, a brothel, a temple, a flophouse, a dope-ring, a launching pad, an insane asylum, a safe-house, and a sleeper cell for an unnamed revolution.""



Calling card for Raffine, Andy Milligan's marginally successful Greenwich Village dress shop, circa 1965.

Among the future luminaries who perfected their craft at the Cino were Edward Albee, Bette Midler, Harvey Keitel, Lanford Wilson, Tom Eyen, Sam Shepard, Paul Foster, H.M. Harry Koutoukas, and many others.'2 As actress-turned-author Magie Dominic noted, many of those who gravitated

toward the Caffe Cino had "slight defects," so it was only natural that a wounded creature such as Milligan would find the place enticing, with its community of lost souls, and exciting opportunities for unfettered creative expression." The Cino was one of the first experimental theaters in the country to address via drama certain then-taboo subjects, such as homosexuality and sado-masochistic relationships, and this freedom of expression on at least two subjects dear to Milligan's heart certainly endeared him to the community." Shortly after his arrival at the Cino, Milligan directed a production of Jean Genet's notorious The Maids, with its highly sexualized sado-masochistic dynamic, and according to observers, Milligan insisted that the whipping scenes be real.'5 Ronald Tavel also recalled that the violence in a Cino production was so authentic in several cases, that performers had to subsequently be taken to the hospital for medical treatment.16

Front page of a March 1965 program for a fundraiser for the Caffe Cino (where Andy Milligan cut his dramatic teeth as a producer/director), after a devastating fire gutted the tiny Off Broadway bistro earlier that year. "Cafe" in the ad is a misspelling.

In addition, it is at the Cino where Milligan would befriend many who would eventually comprise a major part of his film ensemble, including

Magic Dominic, Robert Dahdah, Haal Borske, Hope Stansbury, Matt Baylor and Neil Flanagan." The handsome Neil Flanagan, for one, was a popular figure at the Cino, directing plays as well as starring in them, and Milligan would use him well in several key film productions, including The Ghastly Ones, Guru the Mad Monk, and Fleshpot on 42nd Street.18 The aforementioned Robert Patrick, also a prolific member of the Cino crowd both as author and performer, recalls his first impression of Milligan: "sharp and gruff, at heart an insecure puppy."" Soon-to-be Milligan stalwart Haal Borske penned a play for the Cino called The Brown Crown.20 Another regular in Milligan's films, Hope Stansbury, was a regular sight at the Cino - according to Mari-Claire Charba, Stansbury would "open the Cino doors and set up for the evening."" Robert Dahdah, another Cino perennial who participated in several Milligan films, would be eventually responsible for the Cino's biggest hit.22

During a period of increasing popularity, the Caffe Cino suffered a devastating fire, on March 3, 1965. Two weeks later, a benefit for the reconstruction of the beloved New York nightspot was held at the nearby Writer's Stage, helmed by H.M. Koutoukas. One of the plays presented that evening, Love Song for Mrs. Boas, was directed by Neil Flanagan. Robert Dahdah is listed in the program as the house manager, and Hope Stansbury is listed as one of the ushers. The program also features advertisements from Milligan's Raffine dress shop, by this time located at 101 West 10th Street, as well as an antiques store called The Potpourri, run by Milligan's companion (and subsequent film actor) Gerald Jacuzzo. The success of this benefit secured enough funds to rebuild the Cino, which reopened in May of that year.23

In 1966, the resurrected Cino had its biggest hit, Dames at Sea, directed by Robert Dahdah and starring a young Bernadette Peters. The unprecedented success of Dames at Sea gained the Cino some much-needed publicity, but unfortunately also attracted the Andy Warhol crowd, which introduced the ultimately-fatal specter of hard drugs to the theater.24 Soon, the Caffe Cino became a notorious haven for dope peddlers, junkies, and all manner of other assorted burnouts. This sea change in the temperament of the Cino crowd was even addressed in a 1967 production, The Warhol

Machine, written by Robert Patrick, starring Magie Dominic and Haal Borske, and directed by Milligan.25 Cino's downward spiral accelerated with the death of Joe Cino's lover, Jon Torrey, who was killed in an accident in January 1967. Following this tragedy, the despondent Cino requested that his favorite play, The Clown, be presented. A production was hastily thrown together, featuring Robert Patrick and Neil Flanagan. Shortly after the play closed, Cino attempted suicide, under the influence of drugs supplied by the Warhol gang.26 After an agonizing several days spent in the hospital, Joe Cino finally died on April 2, 1967.27 Fitful attempts to keep the Caffe Cino open failed, and the legendary Off Broadway experiment closed forever on March 17, 1968.28

During this time, Milligan indulged his homosexual inclinations, picking up strangers at local movie theaters for casual sexual liaisons; he was additionally known to solicit young male prostitutes for sadomasochistic sex sessions, some of which were purportedly quite brutal.29 The reckless solicitation of casual sex from anonymous partners, in conjunction with the ultimately prophetic element of violence, was part and parcel of the relative sexual freedom of the time period, but would prove particularly lethal to the gay populace (of which the Caffe Cino boasted an impressive number). Starting in the mid-1980s, observers such as Magie Dominic witnessed a gruesome parade of former Cino luminaries, including Milligan and Neil Flanagan, succumbing to the merciless ravages of AIDS -for Dominic, as for others, "the 1980s were about death.""

But preceding the tragic demise of Milligan, at about the same time as the Caffe Cino was decimated by fire, a friend of Milligan's convinced the budding young director to purchase a used 16mm movie camera, in order to capture one of the Cino's productions on film for posterity. The play was colleague Hope Stansbury's The Sunflower, and with it Milligan would force his way into the burgeoning underground film movement, and begin the career for which he is most noted today.

2

Andy’s Family Values

At the heart of every extant Andy Milligan film (and likely figuring prominently in the missing sexploitation titles) resides a dysfunctional family. This family unit may be biological (e.g., Seeds of Sin, The Ghastly Ones, The Body Beneath), or communal (e.g., Bloodthirsty Butchers, Fleshpot on 42nd Street, Monstrosity). The rare exception is the film wherein a communal gathering is eventually revealed to be a biologically-linked group (e.g., Torture Dungeon). Further, these close-knit social units usually adhere to a strict formula. Often, there is a mother, or mother figure, who predominates, and who is divisive, manipulative, sexually deranged, clinically insane, homicidal, or some combination thereof. This malevolent matriarch is the key power figure in most Milligan films. Coming in second is the father, or father figure, conspicuously absent in several Milligan scenarios. If this wouldbe leader does appear in a Milligan screenplay, he is inevitably passive, ineffectual, cowardly, either submissive to the granted authority of the dominant female, or frustrated by the political strictures imposed by same. This pathetic patriarch acts more often as patsy or servant of the governing woman, than as leader or equal.

Beneath this twisted pair squirm their victims, which in many cases are their biological children. The adult children of these horrible couples bear the evident scars of being reared by lunatic guardians. They are, to a man, neurotic weaklings, simpering malcontents, morally bankrupt deviants who, having had no clear guidance during their formative years, have grown into what they inevitably must: defective adults. These broken siblings tend to exhibit many of their forbearer's worst qualities: manipulative tendencies, a fiercely competitive streak, and burgeoning, if not full-blown, dementia. In addition, Milligan's screen siblings tend to be sexually corrupt, a flaw which can come out in various ways, but tends to focus on promiscuity, infantilism

and fetishism. So blinded are these lost souls to the healing graces of accepted, healthy sexual behavior, they have in many cases desperately sought out sexual partners from within their own biological ranks. The predominance of incest among family members in Milligan's universe suggests another aspect of their upbringing, hinted at but not directly addressed in most cases-that of sexual abuse in childhood by one or both parents.

Finally, the consistently acrimonious atmosphere in most of Milligan's scenarios begins as constant bickering, graduates to angry shouting and yelling, and often escalates beyond that to some form of physical violence. This violence may be sublimated into ritual, as with the many symbolic killings by a mystery figure, but it may just as well come out in an immediate way, as warring siblings resort to blows to punctuate their arguments. This easy familiarity with violence as a means of negotiation also hints at similar abuse by parental figures in childhood, and further expresses the sheer depravity of the typical Milligan household, which seems evil beyond words- at times it almost seems as if the creators of these pathetic souls brought them into existence solely for the opportunity to watch them suffer. Suffice it to say that Milligan's portrayal of civilization's most cherished social institution is not a positive, or even benign one, but instead a devastating, even scathing commentary on an institution which Milligan reviled and disdained, shining a most harsh light upon it. In short, a Milligan family is not a happy family. As Tim Lucas observes:

> In Andy Milligan's films, marriage and family are depicted as unnatural, false traditions that can result only in evil. His parental figures are bitchy, judgmental and self-absorbed; siblings are either meddling, predatory or mad; and home is inevitably a rat's nest of dirty secrets and physical abuses, that must be fled if one is to survive and be sane. When his self-exiled characters dare to go home again, all Hell breaks loose.'

The suffering of Milligan's adult-children characters seems almost sadistically exacerbated by the fact that they so often have to return to the family hearth for some sort of doom-laden reunion, an ill-advised act which at the least causes flare-ups of its members' main neuroses, but can lead to

even worse consequences, not the least of which is violent death. The siblings of a Milligan family, being emotional as well as moral weaklings, seem drawn to these devilish reunions as if by some exterior force, for at times they state their antipathy to the whole idea, only to shrug their shoulders and attend anyway, against what is left of their better judgment. It is as if these siblings had no will of their own, as if even after all these years of living independently in the "adult" world they are still under the spell of these abominable caretakers, and here is where a most interesting dynamic becomes apparent in the films of Andy Milligan.

For in so many of Milligan's films, the adult children of malefic parents spend a great deal of time interacting with those who they purport to despise, suggesting that they have not only a weak will, but perhaps some need to be dominated and hurt by stronger, vicious people. As well, the parent or authority figures in most Milligan scenarios tend to act harshly in an almost sexual fervor, clearly getting much emotional enjoyment out of taunting and hurting those under their spell. It is as though the parent/authority figure acted as a master, and the children/underlings accepted the role of slave or servant, creating the classical dynamic seen, in sexual activity, as sado-masochism. It often appears as if both parties in a Milligan duo are preconsciously engaged in an open-ended sado-masochistic relationship, for both seem to extract a good deal of emotional benefit from the dynamic (their constant wailing and moaning aside).

The sado-masochistic phenomena was first observed and cataloged by the German neurologist Richard von Kraft-Ebing (1840-1902), who labeled its "active" and "passive" forms on two literary figures whose work articulated these predilections. The desire to inflict pain on others, especially in a sexual setting, was dubbed sadism, in honor of Donatien Alphonse Francois (aka "the marquis de Sade," 1740-1814), whose incendiary writings such as Philosophy in the Bedroom and The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom gleefully described amoral monsters practicing cruel and surreal tortures against bed partners, causing their author no end of persecution, including chronic incarceration. The curious phenomena of the individual who extracted (largely sexual) pleasure from soliciting and receiving pain from another's hands was dubbed masochism,

in honor of Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch (1835-1895), whose writings such as Venus in Furs elegantly described the divine tortures of being harshly punished -preferably by a powerful female. KraftEbing, and others who followed, lumped sadism and masochism together as dialectical aspects of an essentially similar impulse-the use of pain for sexual arousal.

Sigmund Freud, for example, declared that while sadists and masochists tended to gravitate towards each other, more intriguing was the notion that both tendencies were usually found within the same individual, with one tendency predominating.' In fact, Freud stated emphatically in his Three Essays, "A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion maybe more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity."3 This utter familiarity within each individual with both sides of what appears to be the same psycho-sexual coin was, to Freud, what likely attracted the active sadist to the active masochist with uncanny regularity, bringing together two souls who at first glance would appear to be polar opposites.

Freud and others further concluded that sadistic proclivities tended to emanate primarily from masculine personalities, and masochistic tendencies from feminine personalities.' This is not to suggest that most sadists are male, and most masochists are female (although history may reveal just such a trend), but that these psycho-sexual predilections tend to gather around the aforementioned gender orientation within each individual. This may have something to do with a child's original understanding of the sexual act, which he at some point becomes aware of as taking place between the father and the mother. The child may (figuratively, if not literally) view coitus not as an expression of love between two beings in harmony, but as a violent act of aggression committed by the father towards the mother, who may come across as in some sense suffering. Depending on his own personality, the child will eventually learn to identify primarily with one or the other character in this most odd coupling.' This psychological landmark will not necessarily be delineated along simple gender lines-for instance, a male child could easily indulge a tendency towards masochism by identifying primarily with the mother, perceived as

the passive (submissive) partner in the interaction, rather than the father, perceived as the active (aggressive) partner.

In terms of theorizing on the possible origins of this need for sexually-fueled destruction within human beings, Freud and others envisioned an inherent destruction, or death "instinct" which, according to Freud, "tries to disintegrate this cellular being and bring each elemental primary organism into a condition of inorganic stability."6 That is, the individual has a subconscious desire to return to the relative stasis of his prenatal being. This deep-seated urge of the organism to seek death is invariably repressed, yet expresses itself in sublimated ways, such as the tendency towards violence. In certain cases, Freud postulated, this repression incubates a powerful outward expression of this need for destruction, and when this need for doling out pain and punishment is acknowledged and acted upon in a ritualistic or habitual manner, the sadist is born. Alternately, when the death instinct remains relatively active in the being's psyche, and not outwardly expressed, it fosters a subject who seems to chronically invite his own destruction, creating the career masochist.'

As odd as it may seem, one of the goals of both the sadist and masochist is a harmonious union with the other. Sadism is, in part, a response to an unattainable desire to bond with the object of desire, through the destruction of that object, so that this painful desire may cease. The sadistic act is thus an attempt at destruction of that which he can never possess. Likewise, the masochist seeks the sadist's blows as a chance to be annihilated, to achieve the bliss of non-being he so secretly desires. Further, the inextricable bond between the sadist and the masochist is strengthened by the notion that each party, to some degree, identifies with the other's actions and motivations.'

Certainly, the vast majority of humanity do not go around either whipping others, or seeking harsh physical punishment. These tendencies in the average population are sublimated to such a degree that they become part of a relatively high-functioning psychology. In the Freudian explanation of the phenomena, many adults become "moral masochists," having successfully internalized their childhood training. This frustrated mass of individuals inadvertently serve society well, in their neurotic need

for harsh authority figures to tell them what to do and how to live. Likewise, there is no shortage of opportunity for the sufficiently sublimated sadist, who will find no end of willing submissives to dominate in government, business and any other cultural arena. In a sense, society in toto has composed a pact wherein those with a desire to impose strong authority on others find willing recipients among their reprimand-seeking peers, and the strange synchronism of this union ignites the volatile frisson which makes the wheels of civilization turn (however awkwardly).'

In relation to our discussion of the curious family unit depicted so often in the films of Andy Milligan, we can see that the traditional family unit is, in many ways, a prototype of the classic sado-masochistic dynamic described above. There is usually one parent (though sometimes two) who act as the emotionally cruel authority figure, under whom the children are mere submissive subjects, beholden to the "master's" whims, be they kind or cruel. In effect, the parents function as the absolute law in these social units, with the children usually having little or no say in the ongoing maintenance of this primal societal microcosm. In many cases, the parental authority enacts its power in what might be called a benevolent dictatorship, in which power is exercised in the service of protecting and nurturing the group's inferiors, with little or no perceived or enacted malice towards the youngers. However, even in this scenario, the sado-masochistic power dynamic can be seen vividly. The parents hold, literally, the power of life and death over their children, at least during the earliest stages of child-rearing, and there is an inherent sense of "mastery" over the offspring which even the benign parent must sense - the parent is aware that he holds an awesome power over his charges, regardless of how he uses this power. As well, even if the parental figure is kind and supportive, the child knows that he is in many ways utterly dependent on this person, and must willingly (or not) accept this dynamic until such time as he is mature enough to venture out on his own. Whether the child enjoys this sense of dominance over him, or bristles against it, dictates how much of a masochistic or sadistic bent the individual may exhibit during puberty, when the flames of burgeoning sexuality exacerbate incipient mental tendencies, and most lifelong neuroses are born. The true future masochist can often be spotted as the child who, when finally able to escape the authoritarian rule of his

guardians, chooses to remain under their care, comfortable under their confining psychological yoke.

This is the best-case scenario; unfortunately, history is legion with accounts of parental figures acting not only unkindly, but monstrously to their charges. It seems to be that many parents get a conscious joy out of abusing their charges, physically, sexually and emotionally. As risible as this reality is, even more curious is the observed fact that many adult children emerge from an abusive family environment, only to return to it time and again, for reasons which appear incomprehensible unless one adds the masochistic equation, wherein the victim of sadism maintains throughout life some sort of dark affinity with his tormentor, and has deep emotional needs to retain some aspect of that ostensibly toxic relationship. The fact that these poor souls are without doubt psychologically broken from the harsh whip of their captors explains but little, for these mental handicaps are easily expressed in the persons' relations with society at large, and have no particular need of being exercised in their incubator. No, there appears to be a twisted but discernible need for the victims of childhood abuse to maintain relations with their abusers, and this universal, if ill-advised phenomenon can be explained, at least partially, by the inherent masochism within the subject of abuse, or as Freud maintained, within all persons with a sadistic or masochistic tendency. The fact that every child born is beholden during some part of his early career to the whims of an older, all-powerful authority figure, and must perforce endure some element of that universal ritual, suggests that all human beings, at root, contain at least the potential, if not the expression, of both sadistic and masochistic manifestation.

It should be stated that there are those who disagree with Freud's dialectical assessment of the phenomena of sadism and masochism. For instance, Gilles Deleuze, in his work on the writings of Masoch, finds the tidy Freudian explanation of the two psycho-sexual tendencies simplistic and untenable. For our purposes in discussing Milligan, the salient point which Deleuze makes is that sadism in general assumes a patriarchal focus, whereas masochism assumes a matriarchal one. According to Deleuze, sadism is "an active negation of the mother and an exaltation of the father.""

The sadistic fantasy is, at root, an attempt by the father to annihilate his family, the mother foremost, with the daughter figuring prominently as accomplice. Alternately, the masochistic experience is rooted in a coalition between mother and son, the goal being the ritual destruction of the father. This symbolic termination of patriarchal omnipotence takes place via the body of the son, the son's torments at the hands of the mother an effort to exorcise the genetic imprint of the father, and thus sabotage the momentum of family lineage. The removal of the father's spirit from the son through flagellation also boasts a more specific sexual purpose, that of exiling the curse of "the genital sexuality inherited from the father."" Thus, it would appear that the symbolic role of both sadism and masochism is the obliteration of familial heritage, a goal keenly in sync with the films of Andy Milligan, as we shall soon see.

Using Deleuze's analysis of his writings as a guideline, it will become apparent that the films of Andy Milligan align closely in several key aspects to the overriding philosophy of Masoch. Although there is an abiding presence of the sadistic spirit in the films as well, a significant emphasis on traditional masochistic principles is what primarily animates many of Milligan's extant creations. First and foremost, the central figure in so many of Milligan's scenarios is a woman, and more importantly, a powerful, calculating, and emotionally cold woman - and this describes the prototypical "Masochistic" punisher perfectly. This omnipotent matriarch lords over moral and mental weaklings, both male and female, who seem compelled to submit to this brutal woman's whims. Men, especially, do not merely submit to a woman in the films of Milligan, they more often glory in debasement and humiliation, suffering all sort of indignity to assure their master's good graces. In fact, one might say that the men in a Milligan scenario are, to some degree, terrified of women, of "Woman," and her power over them. The males in Milligan's films tend to be effeminate, submissive and empathic, as opposed to the women, who tend to be proud, opportunistic and self-interested-this too recalls a similar dynamic in the writings of Masoch. Most interestingly, Deleuze describes a principal type of Masoch heroine as a "modern" creature who "denounces marriage, morality, the Church and the State as the inventions of man, which must be destroyed." 12 The women in Milligan's films most often have a

conspicuously similar agenda, and her sycophants share with her a truly Masoch-esque goal: the abolition of the father. Combine this with the notably passive, or more often completely absent father figure in Milligan's films, and the result is a narrative template which could have come from the pen of Masoch himself.

One of the most curious aspects of the sadomasochistic dynamic between persons is the apparent reciprocal need each harbors for the (often painful) lessons the other can impart. The punishing member of the team can certainly be seen as educating his victim, purging untoward proclivities or soliciting abject obedience, yet the lessons offered to the punisher by the victim are as profound, if more ostensibly obscure. In the fantasies of Masoch, as well as in the films of Milligan, the punisher is often a dominating female, and the sufferer as often a submissive male, with the dynamic of mother and son playing a part in either symbolic or literal form. According to Deleuze, what punisher and punished mutually seek in the works of Masoch is the abolition of the father, and transference of power ("the law") onto the mother, with the son in allegiance. The punishment of the figurative or literal "son" thus serves two major purposes: it attempts to exorcise the genetic imprint of the father from the offspring, while simultaneously establishing the mother as the central power figure in the newly-sought family dynamic. This very same dynamic will be seen as instrumental in many of Milligan's scenarios, which are surprisingly consistent in this regard.

In Masoch as well as Milligan, this occult bond between punishing female and submissive male offers both parties significant gains, both psychological and political (and presumably sexual as well), but also threatens their very annihilation, as they are brazenly defying the omniscience of patriarchy. Some sort of agreement is needed for both parties to feel sufficiently beholden to (as well as obligated to) the other to carry on this revolutionary activity in relative security, and Deleuze observes that in the fantasies of Masoch, this agreement is signified by the use of a contract between parties. This document agreed to by both parties, in many cases a literal legal contract, in others a simple symbolic vow of loyalty, "represents the ideal form of the love-relationship and its necessary

precondition," according to Deleuze.13 Deleuze goes on to note that both the marriage vows, and the slaveowning profession, have traditionally relied on contracts to enforce their legality and insure their hegemony.

As we shall see, Milligan's heroes and villains are almost invariably bound by such contracts, which are elemental in sealing their fate. Firstly, there is the ubiquitous "last will and testament" of an expired patriarch, which is then used as a blunt tool of pain and control by the surviving widow or similar agent, enacting strict, capricious and often cruel guidelines to its "victims" in order to attain some desired bounty, such as the highly symbolic "family fortune." In other cases, a simple marriage contract serves as a mean, invisible chain between two diametrically opposed sufferers, who spend their entire screen lives straining against their fetters, desperate to dodge their mutual fate. Where there is not a physical legal document, there is in its place an arrangement, such as with the recurring character known as the "servant of the house," who is bound by verbal agreement to serve his master(s), and in so doing invariably receiving their rage-filled tortures. These Masochinspired contracts fuel much of the narrative angst in the Milligan films, and often, these diabolical legal documents or their figurative brethren are the igniting force of the tragic psychological cataclysm which destroys so many of Milligan's cursed "families.

In Masoch as well as Milligan, the purpose of the sadomasochistic contract is twofold: firstly, it binds the parties involved into an alliance in which mutual goals are outlined and adhered to, and secondly the agreement seeks the denial of the omniscience of the father, the transferal of absolute power to the mother. This demands that the designated parties voluntarily enter into what is essentially a master-slave relationship, with all its attendant opportunity for abuse, dominance and manipulation. According to Deleuze, this eradication of paternal law, with its dictum of unchecked control over its subject(s), thus inaugurates the opportunity for incest, and as we ponder the films of Andy Milligan, it will become clear that this notion of matriarchal-sponsored inter-family carnal knowledge looms large. For as Masoch and Milligan both illustrate vividly, the abuse

of power, especially within family, has historically involved a sexual component with decidedly fuzzy moral boundaries.

In the Milligan universe, the masochist's need to submit to and be punished for his failure to escape the paternal law dovetails nicely with the sadist's need to possess and punish his unruly subjects, and in this curious alliance both the influences of Sade and Masoch can be seen. The Milligan sadist, be it male or female, has the ultimate goal of the disintegration of the family, and in so doing often revels in destruction for its own sake - the grimmest tortures he can dream up are enacted with gleeful abandon as his "subjects" drop like flies beneath his righteous sword. And always, this violence is in some intrinsic way related to the sexual transgressions of it subjects, for sadomasochism is first and foremost an awful alchemy of violence and sexuality. The hooded killer which stalks many a Milligan film functions as a true Sadean hero, as he represents the Death Instinct incarnate, functioning as an engine of destruction even while he achieves dark sensual thrill from his tasks. In fact, the specific destruction of sexuality is an essential part of the sadist's goals, for his supreme intention is to achieve the demise of all reproduction." With some exception, the protagonists in Milligan's films are barren and childless, so their demise effectively ends their lineage, thus symbolically finishing off the family of Man.

In the films of Andy Milligan, there is often an emphasis on waiting, suspense, and ritual punishment, which are cornerstones of the Masochist scenario. Many a Masoch victim suffers from hanging, crucifixion, and various other forms of physical suspension, and Milligan's cinema offers many similar occurrences. Further, the general atmosphere of "aesthetic and dramatic suspense," as Deleuze describes it, in the works of Masoch, compares favorably with similar theatrical tensions in the films of Milligan, whereas Sade's writings tended towards the "mechanical, cumulative repetition" of highly redundant tortures.

However, it will be seen that there are also shades of Sade in the films of Andy Milligan, and not merely in the delight in inflicting pain upon victims. In some cases, the Sadean influence is a vague, peripheral notion in

the background of events, while in several other cases this influence is a prominent feature of the propulsion of the scenario. Most conspicuously, in several Milligan films, including The Body Beneath (1970), The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972), Blood (1974) and Legacy of Horror (1978), the typical Masochian dynamic of dominating mother/ submissive son is turned on its head, and an undeniably patriarchal conspiracy between father and daughter takes it place, this dynamic being one of Sade's favorite tropes. Even more intriguing are the situations in Milligan (including the above-mentioned films) wherein a matriarchal clan is made vulnerable to attack by a subterranean patriarchal tribe, which rises from oblivion at film's end to ambush matriarchal ascendancy. It can safely be stated that every character in a Milligan film exhibits sadistic and/or masochistic tendencies because, according to their creator, it is an inviolable condition of the human race: "Everybody's a bit sadistic at times- and masochistic.""

* * *

As troubled as Andy Milligan's philosophies were, they could not have been memorably expressed in film without an complementary aesthetic, a framing which successfully manifested his harried characters and tragic narratives, and it is here where Milligan's creative talents came to the fore. Although Milligan's films are in some ways extremely cinematic, as discussed elsewhere, they can also by and large successfully be defined as filmed stage plays, borrowing extensively from the theater and its "bigger than life" reenactments of the shared rise and fall of human circumstance. Intimately familiar with the theatrical tradition due to his work at the Caffe Cino as well as his own Troupe Theater and Tottenville Players, Andy Milligan borrowed extensively from the tradition of the Elizabethan theater for many of his film productions. Elizabethan tragedy was predicated on the notion of how the mighty will fall, of how iniquitous behavior attracts divine punishment to itself, of how apparent worldly success is invariably a precursor to madness and ruin, of how the excessive life inevitably contains its own downfall - all themes expressed vividly in Milligan's films. As well, there are aesthetic quirks in the films of Andy Milligan which recall Elizabethan techniques. The rushed nature of Milligan dialogue exchanges harkens back to the Elizabethan propensity for swiftness in speech and

action. Also conspicuous is the frequent appearance of a severed head, a revered theatrical prop since the beginning of recorded history. Elizabethan audiences in general were connoisseurs of stage gore, and a severed head, preferably of fallen royalty, was almost obligatory. Even Milligan's lighthearted epilogues, meant to soften the tragic ending of the scenario proper, reminds us of the "jig" in Elizabethan theater, wherein song and comedy were used to lighten the spirit of an audience as they departed the stage, especially after a heavily dramatic play.

Even more exciting are the whispers of immortal playwright William Shakespeare which echo throughout the films of Andy Milligan, anchoring them to austere theatrical tradition in a way which adds considerably to their dramatic integrity and timeless quality. Aside from occasional overt references to the Bard, such as Sweeney Todd's referencing of Othello's Desdemona in Bloodthirsty Butchers, there are abundant examples of plot points and themes borrowed by Milligan for his post-modern Elizabethan morality tales. The dying King Lear and his three warring daughters are resurrected, in one form or another, in The Ghastly Ones, The Body Beneath, The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! and Legacy of Blood. Indeed, this potent monarch who challenges death comes across as the preferred blueprint of most of Milligan's fearsome yet pathetic patriarchs. Torture Dungeon seems in some ways a mixture of King Richard III and The Winter's Tale, in its depiction of a corrupt royal court aspiring to the throne; of acrimonious battle between court factions; of the killing of the rightful heir to the throne; and of a lost princess raised by peasants. Even the deformed hunchback in Torture Dungeon may be modeled after the main character in Shakespeare's dark fable of treachery among human swine. Milligan's beloved incestuous relations between siblings crops up in Shakespeare, with Pericles, Prince of Tyre the most noteworthy. Milligan's predilection for long monologues with convoluted back stories may remind the viewer of similar examples in The Tempest and Cymbeline. Guru, the Mad Monk borrows at least two plot points from Romeo & Juliet- the potion which feigns death and the presence of the plague - both of which affect the scenario in portentous ways. Although it boasts a specific source material, Bloodthirsty Butchers can also claim several similarities with Titus Andronicus, including gratuitous mutilation and the use of human

flesh in pastry. Milligan's ever-present bouquet of roses, and other flowers, carries on a tradition of the Elizabethan theater in general, and Shakespeare specifically, with King Henry VI, Part I being one example. The pregnant female, which figures so prominently in several Milligan films, occurs in All's Well That Ends Well- along with the ubiquitous dying patriarch. In King Henry IV, Part II, we have the dying monarch, as well as the omnipresent Milligan deathbed. The Harpies in The Body Beneath may owe something to Macbeth's three "weird sisters." And as mentioned, Shakespeare obliged the quirk in his Elizabethan audience towards seeing a severed head featured prominently onstage, offering up gruesome beheadings in many plays, with Titus Andronicus, KingHenry VIII and Measure for Measure among them; Milligan certainly carried on this tradition well, as severed heads are an almost obligatory prop in his horror films. Finally, there are Shakespeare's immortal imps- Page, Moth and Puck among them - who crop up in a most curious form via Milligan's "abstract" characters, such as Magda in Torture Dungeon, Corky in Bloodthirsty Butchers and the Harpies in The Body Beneath; all of these have the capacity, like the aforementioned characters, to comment on and augment the proceedings with their clever and benign devilment, acting as agents of a mischievous Fate.

As well, Milligan borrowed much of the thematic thrust of Shakespeare, especially in his early, tragic period. Many is the Shakespearean play telling of disaster befalling an accursed family; of heinous, and largely unchecked criminal activity; of the sublime beauty of madness; of the clever machinations of an ideal or "poetic" justice; of the sure punishment of sexual deviance and promiscuity; of the falling of the mighty from heights of omnipotence to the depths of servile degradation. Of course, these themes are all familiar to the characters in the Milligan universe. As well, there are an abundance of despicable characters in Shakespeare who gain strength and succor from the dark energies of human misery -Antony & Cleopatra comes to mind -and Milligan's characters, where they are not innocent dupes of same, are indeed largely drawn from the lowest moral ranks of mankind. Finally, one of the most prevalent conclusions which one can draw from the Shakespearean tragedies as well as the Milligan horror

films is that life is a hellish prison of the soul, in which all that is certain is pain, suffering, and evil works by one's peers.

One final irony between Shakespeare and Milligan lies in the fact that much of their work, and possibly some of their best, is lost to eternity due to tragedy of a very personal kind. The Globe Theater, who employed Shakespeare as both writer and player, is known to have edited many of his plays extensively, and many observers feel that some of his most contemplative and sublime prose was among these discarded pieces. While these censured parts may have been originally saved, they were indeed lost to the future by the disastrous 1613 fire at the Globe, which destroyed all remnants of this precious material. Likewise, much of Milligan's earliest work, his sexploitation films, were destroyed willfully by producer Lewis Mishkin in a fit of maniacal loathing which stole from humanity the chance to sample and judge what may have been some of Milligan's most profound creations. Thus, two creative artists, who mounted glorious tragedies of fallen Man, were themselves privy to the dire consequences of a most fickle Fate.

As regarding the horrific elements of the Milligan horror films, they also owe a debt of gratitude to the influence of the infamous Grand Guignol theater in France. According to Mel Gordon's account of the theater, the Grand Guignol first opened in 1897, under the tutelage of entrepreneur Oscar Metenier. The theater was named in honor of a popular character in puppet shows of the time, "Guignol," which had become a common slang for puppet entertainments; thus the theater fancied itself a "giant puppet show," bringing to grotesque, cartoonish life many of the worst human foibles in lurid and bloody melodramas. The theater gained popularity quickly, with some observers saying it hit its stride when playwright Andre de Lorde, known as "the Prince of Terror," took the helm. The solicitation of clever businessman Camille Choisy in 1915 led to a short-lived era of unrivaled prosperity for the theater. In 1926, producer/director Jack Jouvin was added to the staff, and it was at this time that Guignol fare featured increasingly realistic scenes of lower class domestic trauma.16

Although, as mentioned, horrific depictions on stage date as far back as the Elizabethan era (if not before), it was the Industrial Revolution, with its focus on centralized population centers and the relative anonymity of urban life, which seemed to foment an increased interest in what might be termed "exploitative" popular melodrama in Western Europe. Gordon posits that the apparently insatiable interest on the part of the public on shocking or extreme entertainment at this point in time might have, in some part, been a replacement for recently denigrated public executions. It could also be further extrapolated that the modern cinema, especially the violent exploitation genre of which Milligan was a part, was as well a modern incarnation of these obsolete public executions, in which ghoulish, deplorable behavior was so often the subject, and where savage punishment of the perpetrators was meted out to the guilty, and of course offered to the "public" as entertainment via fetishistic death scenarios."

Certainly, any modern horror filmmaker could cite the Grand Guignol as an influence (and many have), yet Milligan's films share several specific thematic and stylistic similarities which even other horror filmmakers of the period cannot lay claim to. Especially during the Jouvin period, the Grand Guignol's offerings highlighted both psychological and sexual motifs within the traditional horror-melodrama framework, as Milligan did almost invariably in his films. As well, key themes of the Grand Guignol sound like a checklist of Milligan tropes: madness, homosexuality, betrayal and sexual deviance among them. Gordon lists other themes of the Guignol, all of which could be confidently applied to several or more Milligan films: "Thievery, prostitution, alcohol addiction, sexual dependence and humiliation, jealousy, incest, child abuse, cheating, brutality to women, and vengeance."" In addition, the Guignol employed actual criminals to play parts in the plays, reminiscent of some of the fringe-dwelling halfway-house flotsam who appeared in Milligan's films."

A certain "sordid realism" pervaded the gruesome goings-on at the Guignol, with reallife paraphernalia used as stage dressing - this notion compares well with Milligan's idiosyncratic "found object" philosophy towards set design, wherein existing locations, patched-together costumes, and thrift store bric-a-brac were deftly sculpted to create a believable, if

sketchy, verisimilitude. Several stock characters of the Guignol (and horror theater in general) even turned up in Milligan's films, including the sympathetic hunchback and the duplicitous one-eyed scoundrel.20 Yet it is ultimately the realistically-crafted violent death scenes, filmed by Milligan with an unflinching documentary eye, which aligns him most readily with the Guignol tradition. Hyper-real killings, brutal dismemberments, and excruciating on-screen tortures, recorded in a bleak neo-realist style, are as close to Guignol (and as far removed from the slick, stylized CGI f/x of the modern horror genre) as anything else in the canon.

Yet Andy Milligan was influenced also by far more current and provocative forces. From his tenure at the Caffe Cino, Milligan encountered and absorbed the works of established avant-garde playwrights, as well as budding young novices among his own ranks. One such luminary, who had a demonstrable effect on Milligan's films, was Jean Genet (1910-1986), considered a giant in the avant-garde theatrical movement known as the Theatre of the Absurd. Genet's infamous plays, such as The Maids (1948), Deathwatch (1949) and The Balcony (1957), deal with many themes dear to the Absurdist theater movement, touching on many issues which Milligan subsequently addressed in his films. Abandoned by his family at an early age, Genet sought out antisocial behavior as a creative, revolutionary act, which in his case included indulgence in casual homosexual relationships, as well as various sundry criminal activities.' His subsequent works reflect this embracing of the moral underworld as a radical rejection of bourgeois society, often featuring criminals and sexual deviants as their protagonists, and mixing erotica and sordid melodrama with dizzying intensity. The curious alchemy of sexual license and violent proclivities, usually framed within a tangible master-slave dynamic, feature prominently in Genet's major works, these motifs following in the tradition of Masoch and Sade, as discussed earlier.

In The Maids, two servants of wealth pretend at being their master, acting out an absurd role-playing which mocks the traditional master-servant relationship, illuminating the sexual thrill latent in physical punishment, and the significant homosexual energy ignited within same-sex partnerships of unequal political power. Deathwatch features some brutally

frank ruminations on the inherent thrill of sadistic acts, including murder, and the inextricable sexual power of these acts. In The Balcony, various members of a community, from low thief to high court judge, indulge their debased fantasies in a most curious whorehouse, where the primary activity involves a role-playing game in which participants attempt to purge their confining moral heritage by play-acting antithetical characters of dubious ethics. As will become evident, Milligan, who in addition mounted at least two Genet productions during his Caffe Cino period, borrowed heavily from the philosophy of Genet, utilizing many of the playwright's primary motifs in his own work.

For Genet, the search for absolute truth, symbolized by a search for beauty in a world of ugliness and evil, was an unattainable fantasy; the closest one could get was through the ritual magic of enthusiastic role-playing, in which an individual's primary character was absorbed (or ideally, obliterated) by the adopted role he chose to indulge. By this symbolic loss of the self, a person came closest to achieving some sort of objective perspective of the gods. Genet taught that this search for ideal truth could only be approximated by descent into the lowest elements in one's character, expressed symbolically by descent into the lower social realms.22 The subsequent debasement of the individual, which invariably involved either the imparting, or receipt of humiliating sexual activity, is what frees the self from his constrictive moral armor, allowing him brief access to the ugly, yet liberating truth within. Although usually coded, and at other times only half-formed, Milligan dealt obliquely but sincerely with this same search for objective truth, often expressed as a search for emotional release from a diabolical family dynamic, which imprisoned the individual in a veritable prison of madness, torment and unfulfilled dreams.

What is clear, however, is that Milligan took the spirit, if not the letter, of Genet's philosophy to heart when creating his angry, paradoxical, highly confrontational films. Not only do the characters in a Milligan film upset their peers, their constant wailing and moaning can prove highly engaging, and often upsetting, to an audience. Like Genet's plays, Milligan's films have a profound impact on the audience, even if that impact is largely negative, leaving the viewer upset and perhaps even revolted by the sordid

events which have transpired. Some have claimed that plays like those of Genet, in addition to portraying antisocial acts on stage are, in their confrontational aspects, antisocial acts in and of themselves, as assault on establishment culture as well as the specific audience, and one could easily make the same claim on many of Milligan's darkest, angriest films.

Like the characters within, Genet and Milligan may, at some level, have been attempting to punish their audience, to indulge in a bit of playful sadistic dominance over their "captive" audiences, both to challenge and awaken them, and perhaps also as revenge against a society they felt had abused or rejected them. Yet regardless of the creators' possible intent, the effect is largely the same. Martin Esselin describes the potential impact of Genet on an audience thus: "What is more, the audience, by experiencing the impact of what they see, even if that impact takes the form of horror and disgust, is forced to recognize its own psychological predicament, monstrously heightened and magnified though it be, there in front of it on the stage."23 The same could easily be said of Milligan, whose highly cathartic melodramas may have had a profound impact on audiences who stumbled onto them during their lengthy skid-row runs, and saw in the dysfunctional, tragic characters on-screen dark, bigger-than-life reflections of their own monstrous families and wasted lives. Viewed critically, it can be stated that Milligan's films captured the confrontational, even revolutionary ethos of Genet in a way no others in the exploitation film genre have ever approached - the impact of these sordid, hyper-real melodramas can even today only be guessed at - and a mischievous spirit, tongue only slightly in cheek, might even venture to pose Milligan as "the Grindhouse Genet."

Revolutionary playwrights such as Genet, along with filmmakers such as Milligan, forged a radical new direction in theatrical entertainment, undermining traditional narrative and engaging the audience in ways which were at the least confrontational, and might even be deemed subversive. In many ways, they illustrate the theories of Antonin Artaud 18961948), a poet and failed playwright whose writings on the subject of theater irrevocably altered the theatrical tradition. Artaud believed that the theater of his time was a timid, failed thing, handmaiden of the written word and at root, vapid

propaganda for the bourgeoisie. Most theater of the day was, to Artaud, a simplistic recitation of populist prose by talking heads, and its vast potential had been reduced to vulgar story-telling, or as Artaud himself labeled it, "a theatre for idiots."24 In its place, Artaud proposed a "Theater of Cruelty," not (as the label may suggest) a theater where violent activity takes place, a la Grand Guignol, but a theater wherein the audience is challenged and provoked, even involved in the proceedings, due to a radical reworking of theatrical mise en scene.

First and foremost, Artaud insisted that the hegemony of language must be challenged. This is not to say that Artaud suggested the abolition of spoken dialogue in the theater, but rather that language be put in perspective, used only when it was vital to the propulsion of the scenario, and not as a tedious crutch for the recitation of a tiresome narrative. The story, then, would take a back seat to other forces which Artaud deemed far more important. The first of these is mise en scene (the setting on the stage), and in this way Artaud foreshadowed much that was to come in the Western theater. As a Surrealist poet, Artaud had an innate sense of the wondrous visual experimentation which the theater could provide, and which had up to that time been largely unexplored.

Two areas in which Artaud had especially vivid opinions are also areas which Milligan seems to have intuitively (or otherwise) embraced with passion. The first of these is the importance of costume to the theatrical experience. After a momentous witnessing of a performance of Balinese dancers, Artaud understood that costuming is as important a factor in creating not only the look but the philosophy of a theatrical presentation as is plot or performance.25 Far from merely draping the actors, costumes had a highly symbolic role to play, the garments themselves being a character of sorts, and conveying as much about the character wearing them as the dialogue sputtered by the actors. In effect, Artaud felt that the costume worn by the actor gave him a "double body," another existence outside of himself, and this highly symbolic "double" conveyed much archetypal information about the character and his community.

As we shall see, Milligan, as "Raffine," did absolutely amazing things with costume in his films. Beginning with the vague notion of draping his characters in period costume - everything from early Byzantine to late Victorian - Milligan took this function of architect of clothing to surreal heights. As an accomplished tailor, Milligan knew how to stitch together fabric effectively and quickly, and surely one of the reasons for his creating homemade costumes for his threadbare productions was purely economic, as he had not the means nor desire to rent expensive costuming from the local prop house. Yet Milligan took this opportunity to create costumes which, in many cases, although they evoked the garment or era in question, actually went beyond (or perhaps "around") the style of the day, creating costumes which were in many cases almost expressionistic, and at the least exaggerated from their historical prototypes. The result is that everything from fancy dress for fine Victorian women, to court robes for royalty, are a bit "off," modified in a way which makes them, in the spirit of Artaud, almost characters in themselves, the elusive theatrical "double" which he envisioned, and makes the characters in the Milligan films more archetype than prototype. It has been chronicled by participants in Milligan productions that the filmmaker, as "Raffine," would maniacally dash off a costume, pinning it to a hapless performer seconds before the camera rolled, only to dissemble it (if the garment didn't disintegrate beforehand) after the shot was finished. Milligan's costuming appears to have often been a spontaneous creative act, which in and of itself suggests a refreshingly bohemian approach to the art of wardrobe, which traditionally involves carefully delineated plans and constructions, with little to nothing left to the imagination. Milligan, however, seemed to delight in seeing what he could fashion on the spur of the moment, giving the resulting creations a vitality and originality which could nary be duplicated, let alone prophesied.

Even in his somewhat arbitrary choice of filming the majority of his films as period pieces, against all common sense and also many technical odds, Milligan seemed to be aware that by adorning his characters in obsolete costuming, the resultant creations would evoke something other than perfunctory characterization, something akin to magic and ritual, making the melodrama enacted by these expressionist performers more real, yet curiously also more "fantastic." Milligan ranks among those who know

that ancient costumes have the capacity to make their wearers, and their subsequent characters, metaphoric, archetypal, "bigger than life," symbols of universal human truths rather than sketches of specific neo-historic personages. In this, too, Milligan shares some affinity with Artaud who, for his "Theatre of Cruelty," suggested that productions "avoid modern dress" whenever possible, "because it seems absolutely obvious that certain age-old costumes intended for ritual use, although they were once of their time, retain a beauty and appearance that is revelatory, by virtue of their closeness to the traditions that gave them birth."26

Finally, Artaud felt that truly modern theater should challenge and provoke an audience, disallowing it both of the comfort of being a safe, passive observer, and the infantile simplicity of pat, happy endings. In these conceits, Milligan seems to have believed wholeheartedly. Artaud believed that in real life, nature - or fate - denies the omniscience of morality, thwarts the puny will of man, and sabotages the safe harbor of happy endings. Consequently, Artaud believed that an "honest" theater must reflect these darker truths of human existence: "We are not free. And the sky can still fall on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us, first of all, that."27 To that end, in addition to soliciting stronger, more honest narrative material, Artaud believed that a highly visual, somewhat violent, and conspicuously nonverbal theatrical experience might go a long ways towards reflecting the "reality" of reality which was woefully unaddressed in conventional narrative-based theatrical productions.28 Moreover, to Artaud, the spectator must be placed within the sphere of the drama enacted, and not allowed to passively sit at a safe distance, watching the proceedings as if it were a fairy tale which does not affect him. In Artaud's ideal theater, "the spectator is in the middle, and the spectacle surrounds him."29

Milligan's films attempt, and largely succeed, a great deal of Artaud's desire to revise theater towards the more violently honest, nihilistic, and confrontational. First are the screenplays, which revolve around familial warring, suffering, and the usually cruel machinations of fate, which so often fell Milligan's protagonists as well as foes. Milligan's world is an unutterably dark one, in which moral weaklings fight and bicker and cringe

in corners, attempting to stave off the horrible blows of cruel fate. The violence of a Milligan film is not primarily revealed in the various and sundry bloodlettings, although these symbolically represent punctuation of the political and psychological machinations swirling about them; the real violence is the constant hatred and ill wishes screamed from one person to another, and to all from a most vengeful and awful god. The main message of Milligan may be that none are happy, none are fulfilled, none come from a nurturing family, and as pessimistic as this message maybe, it may have rung true for a majority of Milligan's grindhouse audience, who likely knew well of the personal tortures which Milligan's main characters suffered.

As for the role of the spectator, the extremely crude and visceral nature of most of Milligan's films, especially during his first, admirably fertile 16mm period (circa 1967-1973), aided and abetted the violent assault upon the audience which the hyper-traumatic melodrama attempted to convey. The primitive ambiance of Milligan's early features, looking and sounding eerily like home movies from a parallel universe, along with the astonishing cinema verite camera, which prowled in and among the characters as if it were another tortured soul seeking escape, assured that the audience could not but be drawn into the production, a clever, almost alchemical act on Milligan's part that echoed Artaud's dictate, that "the spectator is in the middle, and the spectacle surrounds him."

In many ways, Andy Milligan's films carry on the great tradition of revolutionary theater by undermining traditional storytelling, descending into the lower depths of human existence, and engaging the viewer in ways which are often highly confrontational. The audience of a Milligan film often suffers as much as the protagonists on-screen, being drawn into the dark hysteria of the proceedings by the filmmaker's clever tricks of engagement, primarily his highly subjective camera work. It might be said that Milligan, who himself had admitted and documented sadistic tendencies, attempted to exercise, or even exorcise, his violent proclivities via his art.30 In this, Milligan followed a hallowed tradition, for to many observers, confrontational art can be seen as a constructive, socially-acceptable outlet for a creative person's inherent destructive impulses." By channeling his destructive tendencies into creative labor, the architect, the

scientist and the artist can each effectively sublimate inherent violent energies in the service of fashioning creative works, which are then bequeathed to society at large, in order to serve, entertain and enlighten.32 The formative sublimation of sadomasochistic inclination, it could be said, has saved many a soul from the fires of personal execration and criminal prosecution, and has inarguably enriched civilization as well, from the voluntary withdrawal of potential criminals, and from adding to the cultural arena disturbing, provocative cultural texts which, at their best, illuminate the entire range of the human condition to the masses, perhaps even offering insight into ideals of conduct. At the least, this sublimation can be a personal lifesaver for the troubled artist; as Marie Bonaparte contemplates in her essay on the Freudian interpretation of sado masochism, "What would a Poe or a Baudelaire have become, but for the safety valve of their sovereign art?33

As Milligan harnessed his destructive side in the service of his art, he also awkwardly but relevantly addressed other problematic areas within his own psychology. The first of these is his homosexuality. In Milligan's films, there is a twofold depiction of homosexuality; the first being a brazen, overt declaration of gay orientation, conveyed via conspicuous characters and relationships, liberal male nudity, and (for its time) daring incursions into various aspects of homosexual social life, notions at that moment largely unaddressed in popular culture. Alongside these more confident and nurturing exclamations were equally energetic portrayals of homosexuality as a shame, a curse, a sin, a crime, and an emblem of personal failure. In this curious dichotomy, Milligan was not only voicing an obvious ambivalence about his own sexual orientation, but was accurately addressing the uncertain zeitgeist of the gay community at the time, slowly and painfully struggling towards acceptance in mainstream society, while battling self-loathing, legal persecution, and societal prejudice. It would be incorrect to say that Andy Milligan used his cinema to personally "come out," but it will be seen that his films do illustrate some convoluted, at times contradictory aspects of the postwar homosexual experience in a way few other filmmakers, especially those ensconced in the nefarious exploitation-film ghetto, dared. Milligan's early sexploitation and horror films, especially, can be seen as important illustrations of gay culture's fitful

attempts to declare itself a valid adjunct of "normal" society, and one might observe that like many of his peers, Andy Milligan had one foot in the closet, and the other in the sunlight.

Of course, the heterosexual male fares little better in the films of Andy Milligan, especially when portrayed as participants in the time-honored social contract known as marriage. As might be expected, Milligan's grooms chafe at the bit when constrained by the sacred bonds of matrimony, and act out in various unkind ways, including but not limited to adultery, domestic violence and homicide. More frequently, however, the male member of a Milligan couple is content merely to simultaneously lust over, and loathe, his life partner, demanding physical affections within seconds of cruelly denouncing his betrothed, usually in terms as blunt as possible. Clearly in sync with Milligan's personal philosophy that "people are no damn good," straight males are rarely if ever portrayed as noble, heroic creatures in the films, instead being sketched as petty tyrants, barbaric beasts, and lusting imbeciles. Milligan's straight males also trumpet his own regressive, chauvinistic attitude that men need to browbeat women in order to keep them in line.34

Equally problematic, and in some ways even more intriguing, are the portrayal of women in Milligan's films. Milligan unabashedly declared himself a misogynist, and had none but loathing for the central female figures in his life, his criminal, lunatic, alcoholic mother foremost. Yet as Milligan biographer Jimmy McDonough and others have noted, the filmmaker nonetheless managed to extract astonishing portrayals from women performers, and his female characters are overall his best. According to Milligan himself, this was merely a case of a director somewhat brutally extracting a viable performance from an actress: "Women have gotta be pushed to the wall."35 Yet this virtual obsession with strong women, even if they be destructive or criminal characters, begs the question of Milligan's need to obtain powerful performances from a gender he professed to despise. Surely, in some ways, Milligan was resurrecting the spirit of his mother in many of these malefic matriarchs, yet there are even more female characters, the adult children of the evil mother figures foremost, who have many redeeming qualities, and in many cases

are the strongest and most likable characters in the scenario. In several Milligan films, there is even a group of sisters (linked either through biology or marriage) who form a tentative but at least partially effective alliance against their tormentors. This peculiar showcasing of what can only be termed female solidarity, seems most curious coming from a man who professed to despise women, and would have been unlikely to express interest in the power of consolidated groups of strong women with a potential of amassing significant political power. It may appear that, intuitively or otherwise, Milligan felt the need to include in his screenplays the phenomenon of the burgeoning "women's liberation" movement which, at the time, was as vital a quest for human rights as that simultaneously being pursued by the homosexual community. As we shall see, the theme of female solidarity (as well as its antithesis) in the films of Andy Milligan reflects a projected desire for an ideal community on the part of the filmmaker, a Utopian social unit he apparently did not feel was possible with the male sex.

Milligan's obsession with the "strong sister" (or sisters) likely boasts a more personal genesis, as he had an older sister, Louise, who figured prominently in his formative years. According to Louise, she and Andy were "quite the team as kids," playing together harmoniously in their youth.36 Although the relationship was eventually strained, and later severed by the volatile expression of accruing neuroses, even a late 1980s interview with Louise by Jimmy McDonough reveals the remnants of an assailed, yet enduring affection: "I loved him. I mean, he was my blood brother."37 It is likely that Milligan recalled his early years with Louise as one of mutual affection and support, his sister functioning both as playmate and comrade, as they indulged in the innocent ecstasy of creative play whilst protecting the other from chronic assaults by a dangerously insane mother. Thus, the spirit of Louise, faithful sister and devoted childhood companion, haunts the films of Andy Milligan in the form of strong, courageous sisters to men and other women, in many instances the only sympathetic character in the film - and perhaps most significantly, the closet thing to a hero one will find in Milligan's decidedly "anti-heroic" world.

Indeed, as witness Louise's revealing quote above, some of the strongest women in the films of Andy Milligan are those brave enough to express their love, even towards ungrateful partners, a definable act of courage in settings which are largely hate-filled and acrimonious. For these women know that it is only love which can save humanity from descending to the bestial. Even though this quest for love may remain forever unfulfilled, the strong sisters of the Milligan universe believe it a sacred goal that must be fought for, against all odds. In the final analysis, it may be discovered that Milligan did not believe in the efficacy (or even existence) of lasting romantic love, yet his neurotic and needy characters chronically search for same. Sadly, what they find in its place is usually either the duplicitous pretense of love, a dull, manipulative lust, or more often, a hostile, concerted assault on the very notion, i.e., hate. And staged via the ever-present family dynamic, it is hatred which is most vividly illustrated in the films of Andy Milligan, the moral seeming to be that even the most cherished, supposedly sacrosanct social institution is a monstrous, amoral sham, if its key ingredient of merciful human devotion is absent, leaving a perilous void which is inevitably filled by the savage ordeal of familial abhorrence. Yet strangely enough, in several late Milligan films such as Legacy of Horror, The Weirdo and Monstrosity, one or more protagonists do, through great personal sacrifice, attain some level (even if fleeting) of deep human affection, and so their tortures were, in some wise, rewarded. As Milligan (and countless other artists) for that matter) have pondered in their work, the search for love, perhaps the preeminent human goal, can become either a profound lifelong journey cul minating in unfathomable ecstasy, or an endless trauma of intense personal suffering, failed liaisons and aborted dreams; the outcome of an individual's own journey maybe dictated by the whimsies of fate, by the subconscious predilections of his psychological make-up, or perhaps simply by whether he had the good fortune to be embraced by a clan dedicated to affection, or the ill destiny to fall prisoner to a feral gang consumed by the crazed fires of abomination.

3

Contemporaries

As Andy Milligan created his films during an especially fertile period in American cinema, when the independent film movement which had begun in the 1950s hit its stride, it might be useful to briefly compare Milligan with a few of his contemporaries. Contrasting Milligan to his brethren (which were legion) in the grindhouse sexploitation/horror marketplace will be discussed where appropriate during the discussion of particular films. However, Milligan's idiosyncratic style more often paralleled (and contrasted) that of "fringe" filmmakers of the day, including those in the underground, experimental and art-house movements, with which Milligan's films share some notable traits. In addition to others who made similarly portentous inroads using the "cinema verite filming" technique, such as Haskell Wexler (Medium Cool, 1971) and John Cassavetes (Husbands, 1970), four other underground filmmakers most closely mirror the overall thematic and aesthetic motifs of Milligan - Kenneth Anger, Jack Smith, Paul Morrissey and Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and it is these four celebrated film artists which will be discussed briefly here.

Although a literal, direct comparison with Milligan will yield little of note, a brief mention must nevertheless be made of Kenneth Anger (birth date alternately given as 1927 and 1930),' considered the titan of the "modern" (post-World War II) avant-garde film movement. Anger, more than anyone, helped define this movement, as well as illustrating its momentous aesthetic and political potential. Anger extrapolated the spirit and histrionics of the fantastical high theatrics of French filmmaker Georges Melies, applying it to some truly original ruminations on sexual identity and the essence of character.' In addition, Anger built upon the sophisticated editing techniques of Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, harnessing montage as an alchemical key to the creation of dizzying dialectical discourses which amplified his films' myth-infused expositional frameworks. The results were invariably magical, or "magickal" as Anger would insist, as he considered film, as well as any creative pursuit, essentially an occult action.'

Fascinated with the modern mythology of Hollywood (almost, it seems, from birth), Anger starting creating his own celluloid "myth-poems" at the extraordinary age of 11.4 When he was about seventeen, Anger released Fireworks (1947), which even today stands as a remarkable film "experiment," as well as a shockingly candid and insightful chronicle of the seductions and dangers of youthful homosexuality. For a short time thereafter, the acclaimed Anger was drawn into the burgeoning experimental film movement, soon to be dubbed the "underground film" movement, championed by characters such as Amos Vogel and Jonas Mekas.s After a failed business venture with fellow experimentalist Curtis Harrington, Anger created his next film, another masterwork for him and another high watermark in the underground film movement: Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome (circa 1955).6 Another highly ritualistic work, Inauguration was released in at least two different versions, one in 1958 and the other in 1966, and underscored Anger's predilection for constantly modifying and tweaking his films, which he always considered works in progress, rather than finite commodities. In Inauguration, various characters parade around in garish costuming meant to represent a number of ancient deities. This ritual-infused "masquerade party" motif, which would also serve Anger well in his upcoming films, was based in part on Anger's understanding of a magickal ritual utilized by legendary occult figure Aleister Crowley, in which, according to P. Adams Sitney, "participants assume the identity of a god or goddess.'"

The importance of occult ritual, evident even in Anger's earliest works, is underscored dramatically in Inauguration and subsequent films. Anger believed, as did Crowley and other magi, that the secret to igniting a powerful aesthetic (or "magical") act lie in the fervid joining of opposites, a restatement of the ancient Eastern philosophy concerning the "yin-yang" binary of male-female, master-servant, life-death, good-evil, etc.' As well, Anger had unswerving faith in the power of carefully-crafted, consciously enacted ritualistic acts to transform the self and the world, and to conceivably alter the very nature of so-called "reality." As Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford observe in their analysis of the works of Anger, "The themes of divination, transformation, and alchemy are essential components."9

Anger moved to the East Coast in 1962, settling in Brooklyn, where he concocted yet another miraculous work of aesthetic "magick," Scorpio Rising (1963).10 Again illustrating the curiously violence-centered mythos of the homosexual personality, Scorpio Rising juxtaposed religious imagery, pop music and other cultural ephemera with sketches of leatherclad motorcycle enthusiasts, who invite death at every turn, offering themselves as sacrifices to their god of lust and death, Scorpio. Scorpio Rising shows a profound maturation of Anger's intense vision, in which he takes diametrically opposed source materials and merges them into a unique, and ultimately coherent whole, an astoundingly successful example of actuating Crowley's "union of opposites" theory."

While the early 1960s saw a veritable plethora of gay-centric experimental films (most of which were probably themselves inspired by Anger's Fireworks), still Scorpio Rising stood out from the crowd as one of the most insightful and provocative statements not only about burgeoning homosexual awareness, but of modern America's undeniable death culture, which seemed to unabashedly, even if subconsciously, worship the death-god Thanatos, in effect offering mass prayer and sacrifice towards its own annihilation. In comparison, Andy Milligan's Vapors (1965), which was surely inspired by the abundance of gay-themed films during this period-Anger's included-comes across as a sad, simplistic, tired effort, perhaps nothing more than a "johnny-come-lately" attempt to jump on the gay-film bandwagon. (As stated previously) there is little textual evidence to recommend a comparison of the two filmmakers' works-this brief discussion of Anger is solely to position Milligan within the fringe cinema movement of the day.)

During his short-lived notoriety fallowing the unprecedented success of Scorpio Rising, Anger for a time immersed himself in the homosexual night life of New York City, haunting various cruising spots such as gay-friendly bars and grindhouse theaters in the Times Square area, where he may have very likely bumped into Milligan at some point.12 However, in September 1967, much extant footage of Anger's new project, entitled Lucifer Rising, was stolen from him. Anger subsequently placed a notorious full-page ad in the Village Voice, announcing his "death." Following this, Anger destroyed

many of his earliest films in a fire.13 Some observers, including P. Adams Sitney, have posited that these seemingly selfdestructive acts could in fact have also served as yet another consciously-dictated ritual act, the so-called "change of order," a known magical rite wherein the Magus destroys his former personality and possessions, changes his name, and is thus initiated into a higher level of creative power.14

Nevertheless, Anger soon moved to England, where he worked on a "parallel universe" incarnation of the eradicated Lucifer Rising. This film, which would retain the remaining footage from that film as its core, was finished in 1969 and released as Invocation of My Demon Brother.'s In Invocation, Anger enlarged his canvas, expanding his ruminations on modern culture to include various and sundry social phenomena, such as hippies, motorcycle gangs and rock 'n' roll as all being emblematic of an overarching umbrella of dark forces which pervade malefic society, which celebrates sex, violence, sado-masochistic relationships and of course death, all of which, as Sitney describes it, are "aspects of an occult system. 1116 Invocation ends with a title stating, "Zap You're Pregnant, That's Witchcraft," citing human procreation as the ultimate evil ritual, a diabolical alchemical act in which two ignorant pseudo-magi perpetuate the endless sorrow of civilization (as we shall see) also one of Andy Milligan's pet peeves).

Fading into relative obscurity after this last great work, Anger continues to have an impact on filmmakers and audiences, who are mesmerized and baffled by his problematic relationship with the magickal art of film, and society in general. Anger's works seem to offer two antithetical views of the film art, firstly depicting it as a vital aesthetic power capable of transforming self and society, yet also functioning as a malevolent force which reinforces the death culture it chronicles. In the final analysis, it would appear that Anger sided with the latter view-referencing the belief held by some "primitive" (i.e., nontechno fetishist) peoples, along with many occult aficionados, that photography is a diabolical force which steals the target's soul, Anger himself has stated, "I have always considered movies evil.""

Another pivotal figure in the 1960s' New York underground art/film scene was Jack Smith (1932-1989), an eclectic art provocateur who is only now receiving sustained posthumous scrutiny. Although Smith primarily considered himself a performance artist and photographer, it is two film projects for which he is most widely known: Flaming Creatures (1963) and Normal Love (1963), experimental works which virtually redefined the avantgarde film movement of the period." Flaming Creatures was, at the time, a revolution in experimental film, which ostensibly chronicled Smith's friends and models, male and female, gay and straight, all dressed up flamboyantly and made up to obscure their real features, dancing and prancing and posing in front of one painted backdrop. Yet the contrapuntal editing, ironic "found music" soundtrack, "quivering" hand-held camera, use of outdated black and white film stock, and tight, artistically-inspired cropping of the subjects, all made for an experience which, as J. Hoberman observed, "was something new under the sun."" As Hoberman describes this "delirious home movie of a transvestite bacchanal...,"20 "Flaming Creatures is all dress-up and over-exposure, at once calculated and inadvertent. The seraglio is filled with secrets- disguised faces, painted lips, every manner of veils and gossamers, casually blurred genders, and abstract body tangles.1121

Flaming Creatures had its world premiere on April 29) 1963, at the Bleecker Street Cin ema in New York.22 The film was an immediate "hit," and underground film champion Jonas Mekas soon arranged for a legendary film festival at the Gramercy Arts theater, which included Flaming Creatures, Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising, and Andy Warhol's Sleep.23 A subsequent showing of Flaming Creatures was raided by the police, and the film was confiscated, along with the arrest of Mekas and filmmaker Ken Jacobs.24 Both men were eventually convicted of obscenity charges, due ostensibly to the film's frank frontal nudity; yet the occasional close-up of a flaccid penis was probably more threatening to the patriarchal gatekeepers for more psychological reasons, as Hoberman notes: "In so casually representing the male organ, it desecrated the underlying symbol of all power structures."25 By daring to show the male penis in its pliant state, within a playful, casual, clearly non-sexual setting, Flaming Creatures became the very antithesis of the traditional ideology of pornography,

wherein the aroused, erect phallus of maledom is obediently serviced by a submissive (preferably female) lackey.

Although Flaming Creatures is Smith's most notorious work, and undoubtedly his masterpiece, his "commercial" follow-up, Normal Love, is worth noting for the maturing of some of Smith's ideas and techniques in the first film, as well as looking in some ways remarkably like an early Milligan production, in style if not in content. Set in Smith's omnipresent faux-Arabian motif, Normal Love depicts a group of sexually ambiguous characters engaging in a tale of sexual stalking in the primordial swamp of human genesis, filmed in a backyard "Garden of Eden."

Aesthetically speaking, Normal Love has a lot in common with a Milligan film like The Ghastly Ones or Torture Dungeon. Like Milligan (and for that matter, other fringe filmmakers of the day), Smith used scratchy library records for his soundtrack, idyllic backyard settings for his apocalyptic fairy tales, and colorfully symbolic fabric to drape all his characters. Like Milligan, Smith's cinema verite camera captured a frank spontaneity missing even from other underground art film of the day, Warhol's included. As well, Like Milligan, Smith shot his films on 16mm reversal film, editing the source original, and often using outdated film stock and "short ends," essentially the discarded merchandise of other consumers.26

Yet ideologically, Smith and Milligan seem at first glance worlds apart. Milligan toyed, even radically, with gender in his films, pitting desperate, sexually ambiguous creatures against one another, each trying to please a vengeful, god-like parent figure in their futile quest for social acceptance. Even so, Milligan's characters are usually clearly drawn as male and female, with only their sexual history and goals confused and ambiguous (the occasional bisexual "freak" notwithstanding). In contrast, Smith's agenda was pure and straightforward -he wanted to completely abolish the arbitrary and punitive demarcation marker known as gender. In both Flaming Creatures and Normal Love, characters are dressed in Smith's highly symbolic fabric, both sexes made up like cheap Arabian tarts, and cropped by the camera until the antiquated labels "male" and "female" become

obscure, obtuse, and meaningless. Smith alchemically merged male and female into one immutable gender - all of his characters, in fact, look like various incarnations of Hermes-Aphrodite, the original hermaphrodite. As Smith often intoned, invoking the spirit of Artaud, "the costume is the character," and everyone plays the same character in a Smith film, the character labeled "the human being as sexual mystery."27

Yet for all that, Smith had a highly problematic, fatally suspicious view of the artist's precarious place in society. He felt that art should never be commodified, turned into a vulgar product "for sale" like a carton of milk or a footstool -he thus had an extremely confrontational relationship with the contemporary New York art establishment. In his art, Smith addressed what he felt was the true intention of "the art world," that being the cynical reduction of art into soulless, interchangeable product, merely another disposable trinket for capitalism to exploit and discard."

As Smith himself often put it, the most aesthetically daring, ideologically honest act which an artist can perform is to (figuratively and literally) "not show up."29 This revolutionary stance clashes loudly with Milligan's crass commercialism, as the latter filmmaker gave his art away for peanuts, in order to survive, in order to create, in order to find and entertain that ever-allusive audience. Whereas Smith envisioned a virtual creative utopia, an art-commune collective in which artisans were as valuable as accountants and trashmen, and were rewarded for their functional aesthetic gifts to society by the compensation of their basic survival needs, Milligan meekly accepted the most brutal tenets of ruthless consumer capitalism, which was to make as much product as possible for anyone who would pony up even the slightest amount of capital to sponsor the event."

Added to this contrary position with the current art scene was a streak of mistrust within Smith, which caused him to alternately hide, and destroy, some of his best theoretical artworks and projects. Smith knew that what he was doing, in photography and performance and later in film, was exciting and new and likely without precedent, and he constantly feared the theft of that most ethereal of intellectual beasts: the creative idea. As Edward Leffingwell states, "Smith was convinced that (his colleagues) had followed

his work to be fertilized, to receive the inspiration they lacked in order to do their own work.""

This may sound like the paranoia of a garden-variety neurotic, until one realizes that Smith's concepts were in fact "borrowed" wholesale by many artists of the time, Andy Warhol foremost, who even admitted in his dairies, "Jack Smith is the only artist I would ever copy." Most conspicuous of this conceptual theft was Smith's coterie of models, friends, outcasts and transvestites, which he dubbed his "Superstars of Cinemaroc," a parodic allusion to the old Hollywood star system which Smith adored, even while he radically revised it. While few have, even today, heard of Smith's invention, art history books everywhere speak of Warhol's "Factory," and his stable of fringe-dwelling "superstars." As Lawrence Rinder states it: "The term `superstar' as well as the very idea of Warhol's Factory-an avant-garde, Bohemian simulacrum of the traditional Hollywood studio, consisting of essentially replaceable stars and starlets presided over by a charismatic auteur - were appropriated by Warhol from Smith's Cinemaroc."32

Much is made of Smith's endless procession of drag queens, which to some mark his films as mere camp, yet nothing could be further from the truth. A careful study of Smith's films reveal, as mentioned above, that both males and females are depicted interchangeably "in drag," becoming conspicuously indistinguishable from one another. Smith's provocative costuming was not about transvestite performance or silly camp innuendo- it was about the complete obliteration of punitive and arbitrary gender demarcation, a revolution he attempted, and largely achieved solely through costume.33 Alternately, Milligan used elaborate homemade costuming as a way of codifying character traits, also useful as metaphoric symbols for societal archetypes. Milligan did not, by and large, use his costuming in the service of any radical gender-bashing agenda; rather, Milligan's costumes invariably portrayed the psychological make-up of its wearer, as the "scarlet letter" of the bearer's invariably bankrupt moral character.

The genius of Jack Smith lies in the fact that he knew, and was able to communicate through his art, that gender is a red herring, at root a socio-economic brand and a socio political prison, more divisive than inclusive,

more curse than joy. The sex-less (not sexless) self is all that matters. In his photography and performance pieces, Smith relied on his own "being" to portray his most profound statements on existence, for in the final analysis what is there, for everyone, but the self? All of humanities' trials and foibles are enacted within each personal self, as each individual suffers all of humanity's painful journey towards the perfection of annihilation. In a gendercentric, capitalistic culture, where the only things that mattered were a sexually "fixed" identity, the extortion of proscriptive "rent," and an endless supply of human "product," Smith truly believed that he was the lone voice of sanity. In the mercenary thieves' market known as modern capitalism, Smith proclaimed, "I'm the only normal man in Baghdad."34

Certainly one of the most fascinating filmmakers of the 1960s and the 1970s, who can be compared in certain aspects with Andy Milligan, is Paul Morrissey (1938 -), the gifted director responsible for some of the most controversial and memorable feature films of the time period. Morrissey's undisputed high watermarks include Flesh (1968), Trash (1970) and Heat (1971), all amazingly bleak, simultaneously humorous portrayals of fringe culture. Produced by Andy Warhol, and featuring many of his "Factory Superstars" in lead roles, the general public fell under the (probably intentional) impression that Warhol was the creator of these eerily realistic chronicles of wasted lives within the sex-and-drug cultures, when in fact Morrissey was the sole creative force behind all three films.35

It would appear from published accounts that Morrissey did not mind remaining in the background while his flamboyant sponsor took credit for his works-yet the fact that Warhol to this day receives credit for other people's product (of which Morrissey is only one example), work in which Warhol had little if any creative input, is historically inaccurate as well as disingenuous. This curious relationship between producer and artist hints at similar partnerships in the film marketplace (and the commercial art field in general), and does remind us of Andy Milligan and his "partners" such as William Mishkin, Leslie Elliott and Jerry Balsam, who sponsored Milligan productions only to practically steal them from their maker, taking the lion's share of the proceeds, and treating the filmmaker as an observer to his own creations.

As did many budding young artists in the early 1960s, Paul Morrissey bought a 16mm camera and began shooting experimental films in and around Greenwich Village. Soon after, Morrissey rented an area storefront in order to showcase his own films, as well as those of others in the burgeoning underground film movement of the day. Meeting Andy Warhol in 1965, Morrissey soon found himself on the payroll, performing several tasks simultaneously, including the management of Warhol's new art magazine, and most conspicuously, the creation and promotion of Warhol's "drug-rock" experiment, The Velvet Underground.36 Morrissey was also interested in getting further into the experimental film movement, although he is on record as calling Warhol's early, minimalist films fascinating, but ultimately meaningless curios.37

Morrissey's first incursion into Warhol's film endeavors was My Hustler (1965), which dealt with two men involved in a casual homosexual relationship. The film, considered a turning point in Warhol's film career, introduced several semi-narrative conceits into the largely improvisational scenario, all of which were due to Morrissey's involvement.38 Assuming that Milligan's own Vapors was produced and released later that same year, it may be that My Hustler was an inspiration for Milligan's not dissimilar treatment of the vacuousness of the current gay pickup scene.

But it is Morrissey's forthcoming venture into commercially-exploitable feature films, such as the above-mentioned Flesh, Trash and Heat, which mirror similar productions by Milligan. During the period 1967-1969, Milligan produced most of his sexploitation-themed features such as The Promiscuous Sex, Tricks of the Trade, Gutter Trash, The Degenerates, etc. All of these, from extant promotional materials as well as eyewitness accounts, dealt frankly and graphically with many of the topics covered in the Morrissey/Warhol features, including drug abuse, sexual violence and sado-masochistic relationships. As well, Milligan's films during this time period are generally considered to be his most daring stylistically, his most "experimental," again evoking comparison with the better-known Morrissey films. With their low budgets, bleak atmosphere and gang of unwashed street-thespians, Morrissey's features of this time period may look shockingly like some of Milligan's similar product, and it may have been

merely the whims of Fate that relegated Milligan to the sexploitation ghetto while Morrissey, for a time, became the critic's darling. However, much of the difference can be attributed to each filmmaker's sponsor - in Milligan's case, quick-buck producers like Jerry Balsam and William Mishkin all but guaranteed that Milligan's sexploitation features would play the grindhouse/drive-in circuit exclusively, whereas in Warhol, Morrissey at least had someone who wanted to break into the "respectable" cinema arena, and was able to effectively bankroll this effort.

But for the greedy machinations of unscrupulous money men, Milligan might be considered an art-house favorite today. Although there are precious few extant examples to conclusively compare with, it is likely that Milligan was covering a great deal of the narrative and aesthetic territory which Morrissey covered with such great success. As mentioned, both filmmakers centered on the darker side of the youth culture, specifically the problematic sexual revolution, and the scourge of street drugs. Both had individual styles and a trademark aesthetic, which separated them from their peers, and for that matter, each other. Both filmmakers relied a great deal on the power of performance, and gave their actors much leeway to enhance their characters. While Milligan held a tighter reign directorially, he let his performers indulge in their intuitive histrionics, and it is on record that Morrissey especially enjoyed letting performers run with their character, to see where it would lead.31 Both filmmakers created product which was dialogue-heavy, often to the detriment of any perceivable "action." Most conspicuously, both Morrissey and Milligan peopled their early features with social flotsam: degenerates, street people, sexual obsessives, addicts, transvestites, any and all casualties of the new liberalism."

However, it is regarding theme where the similarities, and vast differences, between Morrissey and Milligan become most clearly outlined. Both filmmakers vividly depicted the sordid side of life in the sixties, only to use these illustrations to frame a cautionary tale which decried this lifestyle, showing in the final reel its horrible outcomes. In this way, both filmmakers followed the hallowed tradition of the classical exploitation film, where the wages of sin were shown in graphic detail in order to titillate the audience, then reversed and condemned at film's end in order to justify what was

spuriously called the message or "educational value" of the film. In the hedonistic free-for-all of the sixties, Morrissey and Milligan had ample ammunition with which to fuel similar diatribes against the current scene. In general, both Morrissey and Milligan launch their scenarios with the basic premise that the removal of social structure and the relaxation of mores and morals, first seen as a welcome antidote to societal repression, actually acts as a catalyst for personal destruction in all but the strongest soul. Maurice Yacowar eloquently states Morrissey's recurring theme thus: "people trying to survive all the freedoms they have been cursed with."" This conservative perspective, again a hallmark of the classical exploitation film, serves both film makers well, albeit with radically different results. While grimly depicting what he called "the waste of life," Morrissey ultimately takes a compassionate, largely humanist view of these failed creatures, and imbues them with a heroism and sympathy which is striking, considering the characters and their sometimes horrific crimes against self and society.42 Not so Milligan, who seemed to sadistically delight in subjecting his characters to torture and violent death. There is little sympathy, and much disdain, towards the characters in a Milligan film, and it is rare when there emerges an identifiable hero. Whereas Morrissey valiantly strives to forgive his most failed characters, applying some hasty badge of heroism to them if possible, Milligan delights in painting his characters as unflatteringly as possible and then, slowly, torturing them to death. Whereas Morrissey sketches his characters as, by and large, weak-willed victims of the throwaway culture they drown in, Milligan callously blames these same creatures for their failure, all the while despising their hubris and unwarranted self-aggrandizement.43

One source of this considerable philosophical discrepancy might be found within the two filmmakers' antithetical views on organized religion. Morrissey, a life-long Catholic, considers institutional religion as one of the primary stalwarts against societal disintegration, and calls his strict Catholic upbringing "the best thing that ever happened to me." This affection for, and belief in, the power of rigid ideological dogma to forge an orderly, contentedly repressed society goes some way to explain both Morrissey's unerring empathy towards his "sinners," as well as his faith in the healing powers of grace and repentance.44

Compare this with Milligan's memories of his upbringing in a "German Lutheran" environment, in which corporal punishment was the answer to all intellectual query.45 Regarding his fearful, traumatic schooling, Milligan quipped, "I was forced to believe," succinctly articulating the unspoken lament of all children who are forced to undergo the intellectually devastating brainwashing emblematic of the typical religious institution.46 It is thus no wonder that two common themes in Milligan's films are a blistering negative commentary on organized religion, alongside ubiquitous, violent physical punishment of transgressors. While a strong subtextual antipathy towards organized societal institutions of any kind inhabits pretty much every film Milligan ever made, in certain cases, such as Torture Dungeon, Guru, the Mad Monk and The Weirdo, religion is shown as nothing less than a lawless, self-contained sanctuary for embezzlers, megalomaniacs, killers, molesters, and other assorted sociopaths. As for the constant punishment of characters in Milligan's universe, the filmmaker had a playful sadistic streak which he safely exorcised via his cinematic creations, but the source of that tendency towards aggressive action towards others may have had as its genesis his frequent physical abuse by the Lutherans.

Yet the main social institution which both Morrissey and Milligan ruminate on at considerable length is that sacred cow of modern civilization: the family. For Morrissey, the family, ideally, is the perfect social institution, a potential source of love, strength and guidance for all its members.47 Morrissey further felt that the insidious liberal values of the sixties, with their invitation to endless license, had undermined the power of family and church to create happy, healthy citizens. In their place stood the casual, slapdash social units of the sex-seeker, the drug-taker, the bored, lethargic and mentally feeble, pathetic imitations of the (to Morrissey) sacred biological family unit - it is this unholy bunch of losers, malcontents and miscreants which serves as the holding pen for most of the sad characters in his films.48 These pathetic surrogate families always fail to sustain themselves, always fail to protect or nurture their members, and always fall apart, bringing down their charges with them. As Yacowar describes it, Morrissey's surrogate families are, "the nuclear family, exploded."49 Further, Morrissey consistently declared that the primary destroyer of the sacrosanct

family unit was the incursion of a debilitating liberal value system.50 Lacking love, Morrissey's characters turn to the only available substitutes-casual sex, recreational drugs, and other cheap thrills that attempt to fill the void left by the absence of an abiding and nurturing social environment.

For Milligan, the family is not an answer to liberal society's problems, but instead a major cause of all human suffering. Far from declaring the family an ideal social unit, Milligan consistently paints the biological family unit as a virtual hell on earth, a prison and torture chamber which entraps the powerless individual within a diabolical power structure from which escape is possible only through severe mental collapse, if not outright death. Most specifically, Milligan's films ruminate at length on the deleterious effects of a malignant parent figure, who can, and often does, single-handedly destroy everyone in their familial grasp. In fact, much of Milligan's scenarios concern a wounded person's attempts, usually unsuccessful, to escape the ongoing psychological effects of an abusive family. Yet in Milligan's cruel universe, even supposed adults are not free from the ongoing psychological manipulation of family, as witness the numerous protagonists who are forced to revisit their childhood suffering as adults, at one of Milligan's invariably monstrous family reunions. In these debilitating, often fatal, gatherings, adult children are forced to relive the horror of being punished and tortured by always stern, often demented parents.s'

However, there are thematic areas in which Morrissey and Milligan fall into a curious synchronicity. As mentioned, both filmmakers highlight the sad lives of society's losers, even if they have different goals for them in the end. Both filmmakers shot their most important features on extremely low budgets with a decidedly raw aesthetic (in Morrissey's case as much for philosophical as economic reasons), and this primitivism aided their subject matter immensely.52 Both filmmakers made features during the same time period which defied easy genre categorization, having one foot in the commercial sex film genre, and the other firmly planted in the art-house/experimental movement of the day. Finally, both Morrissey and Milligan were ahead of their time in their frank depiction of male nudity.

Morrissey's early features, as well as Milligan's sexploitation films both centered on a multitude of tawdry sexual liaisons, yet both had a reactionary and damning perspective on it, in contrast to many of the more upbeat, "pro-sex" sexploitation films of the day. Although sex is abundant, even compulsive in the films, it comes across as more chore or ritual than joy. Sex for Morrissey and Milligan is a destructive force, a punishing addiction, a pathetic replacement for love from characters who cannot love, and thus cannot be loved. Sex often leads to a protagonist's literal, if not figurative death in many a Morrissey and Milligan scenario. Or as Yacowar concludes regarding Morrissey's Flesh, "To be blessed with being is to be cursed with flesh," a statement which could have easily come from the mouth of Andy Milligan."

Certainly with the "Flesh trilogy," Morrissey delved into some interesting territory regarding the presumption of clear gender distinction, exemplified most overtly by the transvestite, whose refusal of socially-approved sexual distinction symbolized the strong will of the true individual.54 As well, Milligan peopled his melodramas with many bisexuals, transvestites, and other sexual ciphers who collapsed rigid gender demarcation even as society itself was convulsively doing the same. Allied with this theme is the emphasis from both filmmakers towards mutually-dependent relationships wherein one member clearly plays the leader, and the other the follower. This dynamic of master and slave, with its intended sexual references, inhabit the films of Morrissey and Milligan with equal intensity. In Morrissey's treatments of the theme, the interdependence of the partners is emphasized as a particularly morbid but hardy binary, which usually ends up destroying one or both parties. Milligan takes this evident truth even further, and applies a layer of playful sadomasochism to the dynamic, wherein the paranoid master and the disgruntled servant often play violent, mutually punishing sex games which uncannily echo their mutual need for, and simultaneous disgust for each other." To sum, if the servant chafes under the harsh yoke of his master in a Morrissey film, he is more than likely to gleefully bash in his loving master's head with same yoke in a Milligan fable.

To Morrissey, too much freedom is a bad thing, leading to unfocused lives of ennui and despair. Only the disciplined and strong-willed individual can survive in a society without harsh conformist fetters to reign in his unruly impulses towards dissipation - all others are to be considered pathetic, yet forgiven, human waste.56 It is this human waste which Morrissey lovingly, yet critically, brings to life in his amazing films. Morrissey sees liberal America as a vast wasteland of useless frivolity, claiming innumerable victims. The individual in a Morrissey film, although he may be charismatic and even lovable, is caught in a vicious whirlpool of sexual license, debilitating drugs and general social upheaval from which there is usually no escape. Yet Morrissey's protagonists ultimately accelerate their own downfall with a veritable resume of bad decision-making, another nod to the deleterious effects of unlimited freedom.57 In the end, there is only the lonely, shallow narcissist, looking for the next cheap thrill until merciful death carries him away.

Milligan agrees with all of the above, yet adds his own indelible touch. In addition to the devastating pressures brought to bear by an amoral, unstructured society, the individual already has two strikes against him - he is crippled psychologically by the brutal upbringing of a dysfunctional family, and as much as he tries, that malevolent force still follows his every waking step, assuring that he fouls up any attempt to correct or escape his inevitably impulsive, usually ill-advised behavior. The sad losers in a Milligan film are not merely prey to the traps set by liberal society, with all its empty charms, but as hopeless neurotics (or in some cases full-blown psychotics) they have absolutely no chance of surviving and flourishing in a chaotic world which, for all its supposed attractions, looks horrifyingly like another diabolical incarnation of the prison of childhood: the corrupting family. Time and again, Milligan's heroes find eternal peace only through exiting the hell of human existence.

Yet another contemporary who shares some apparently similar, ultimately superficial parallels to Andy Milligan is Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945 -1982), the iconoclastic German filmmaker whose tumultuous rise from obscurity to the darling of the art-house circuit is a story unto itself. Like Milligan, Fassbinder started his artistic career in the theater, as a workaholic

"jack of all trades," and took with him into his filmmaking ventures several of his theatrical compatriots, as well as much of his idiosyncratic ideology.58 Like Milligan, Fassbinder was a compulsive worker (quite likely bipolar), imposing a frenzied work schedule on himself, as well as cast and crew, throughout productions. Also, the two filmmakers shared violent, self-destructive personalities, traits which both aided and undermined their creative pursuits, and poisoned (in some cases fatally) their relations with others.59

Finally, both Milligan and Fassbinder were homosexual; this sexual orientation had a profound impact on each's films, albeit with entirely different results. As for their personal lifestyles, both Milligan and Fassbinder seemed to have forged significant relations with women as well as men - both were married to a woman for a time, for reasons known only to the grooms. Even more notable, Milligan married one of his actresses, Candy Hammond, while he was filming Seeds (1968) later released as Seeds of Sin), and much of the film can be seen as an inadvertent chronicle of the event and its participants; Fassbinder married one of his actresses, Ingrid Caven, using footage of their wedding reception in The American Soldier (1970).60 Most intriguingly, Fassbinder was prowling the gay bars of New York City during the mid-1970s, a minor celebrity after his first flush of arthouse fame; this was of course Milligan's stomping ground as well, and one can only wonder if the two giants of "outsider film" ever brushed shoulders during one of their "trolling" excursions.

Thematically and aesthetically, however, Milligan and Fassbinder could not be more antithetical. Fassbinder, by and large, mounted relatively expansive melodramas dealing with social outsiders, the emotional vacantness of bourgeois society, and Man's neurotic, often failed, search for love in a spiritually dead culture; his characters often showed symptoms of boredom and ennui, with a suffering largely suppressed. Fassbinder's camera was usually stable, safe and predictable, with carefully composed settings; his stories were intriguing yet longwinded, and in the end fairly traditional, with studied dialogue passages predominating. Alternately, the films of Andy Milligan were almost always "in a rage"the camera, the script and the performers usually racing around, nervous, screaming, breathless, even in a

panic. Milligan's slapdash, harried mini-dramas were invariably made on the tightest of budgets, with deliberate shot composition all but obliterated by the cameraman's neurotically-prowling eye. Dialogue exchanges are frenzied, rushed, even sabotaged by faulty delivery, and one scene often literally crashes into the next one. As well, while Milligan is certainly concerned with social outsiders and the flaws of conventional society, he is more interested in the raw emotion expressed by desperate, enraged friends and family members. Fassbinder's protagonists pout in private and stew in silence for a large portion of their screen-lives, before bursting into some sort of cathartic or apoplectic breakdown at film's climax; Milligan's characters display hysteria, rage, and a suffering largely expressed, and spend virtually their entire cinematic existence within a sustained moment of mental disintegration, spitting venom at their fellow sufferers and wailing piteously to the heavens for deliverance from their diabolic hell.

Yet curiously, both filmmakers are on record as having often relied on first takes, retaining a spontaneity of performance which is far more evident in Milligan's work, which comes across largely as the capturing on film of a first rehearsal, than in Fassbinder's, which looks very mannered and affected.61 Fassbinder's acknowledged mentor for much of his career was director Douglas Sirk (1897-1987), whose slick and glossy Hollywood melodramas (Magnificent Obsession) 1954, All That Heaven Allows, 1955, Imitation ofLife,1959, etc.) dealt obliquely with some troubling issues of the day, including racial prejudice, class conflict and confusion of sexual identity. The borrowing of Sirk's expansive landscapes, Suburban fairy tale mythos and "bigger than life" characterizations did not ultimately translate well into Fassbinder's gruesome, grimacing neo-realistic sensibility, but the results are surely interesting, if uneven and pretentious.62

As have many other artists throughout history, both Milligan and Fassbinder illustrated through their scenarios the dark truth that power is a determining factor in all human relationships, and violence is often the tool of control (expressed via the abundant, eerily realistic domestic violence enacted in their films). As well, most relationships in both artists' films end in pain, suffering and disaster. Both Milligan and Fassbinder invariably created protagonists who were moral, emotional and intellectual weaklings,

sad losers who easily succumbed to the darker side of human adventure, and tended to express their moral weakness through either sadism or masochism. As a glance at their personal histories will reveal, both artists clearly had sadistic personalities, and exacted harsh control over their partners and co-workers, so it is not surprising that there are vividly-painted sado-masochistic streaks running through many of their characters.63

The protagonists of both Milligan and Fassbinder share other similarities. Many are obsessed with sex, and sex is part, if not all of their downfall. Many of Fassbinder's heroes, such as the poor sap in Merchant of Four Seasons (1972), are summarily punished for a weakling's addiction to impulsive pleasure, suffering afterwards in a hellish purgatory which ultimately offers as its only exit the blessed escape of suicide. The freedom to destroy one's self appears to be one of the only freedoms available to many of Fassbinder's tragic characters, compulsively self-destructive failures who have burned all their bridges until only the siren song of sweet death remains.

One could say that Fassbinder and Milligan were both concerned with chronicling the broken dreams of little men, but each took this motif in wildly different directions. Fassbinder consistently used bankrupt relations and destroyed lives as metaphors for the fatal flaws and historical deficiency of capitalism, while simultaneously using ruined business ventures as symbols of sexual impotence and romantic failure. Alternately, Milligan used the same trope of decimated societal groups as an almost ritualistic attempt to shine a harsh light on society's cherished notion of "the happy family" which was, to him, illogical, illinformed, and in the final analysis, delusional; as well, the use of family as a metaphor for society depicted its members as sexual degenerates, mired in their own misery and unable to escape due to their inherent weakness of character.64

Both Fassbinder and Milligan employed the use of trademark symbols as poetic signatures to their work. For Fassbinder, the recurring image of the reclining female was a key symbol, whose teasing, pastoral presence hinted at an ideal love forever unattainable by foul man. For Milligan, the ever-present bouquet of roses was useful as a symbol of unattainable grace, as

well as a quixotic emblem of the threat of disaster which lurks within the sublime. Milligan also employed the emblematic flowers, often a centerpiece on the family dining table as witness to that community's inherent duplicity and falsehood, the specter of betrayal which hides behind the false civility of blood relations.

Throughout his career, Fassbinder offered the more ostensibly adult subject matter, yet Milligan tackled some very adult subject matter obliquely, against the grain of the plot, yet integral to it. With Milligan, Horror and Sexploitation were mere excuses for tense, rage-filled family dramas, a universe not unlike that of Tennessee Williams but gone irredeemably savage, in a way only the commercial grindhouse cinema environment of the day could support. During this brief, extraordinary time period, artistically-inclined filmmakers such as Milligan intuitively sensed that the uncensored and unmonitored cinematic ghetto was the one place where they could tell any dark tale, commit any vile taboo, and artistically get away with virtually anything.

One might say, tongue only slightly in cheek, that Fassbinder is the safe, "art house" incarnation of Milligan; his films are much bigger and more personal, but cover much of the same emotional territory in depicting the dark side of human relations. Alas, Fassbinder now boasts a foundation to preserve and champion his work, whereas Milligan has a comparatively tiny fan base, an unconnected gathering of aficionados, some of whom seem virtually ashamed of their devotion to their scrappy grindhouse god." One might even call Milligan the "closet" Fassbinder, because aside from the abundance of accidental/ tangential references to homosexuality in Milligan's films, there is precious little overt homosexual agenda, nor much of a personal imprint of the filmmaker's own personal sexual orientation - in his case a conspicuous omission.

Yet this "closeted" tendency of Milligan creates much of the bountiful sexual tension which abides in his films, and astute fans can easily "read between the lines" to forge striking revelations about sexuality, both straight and gay, emerging from the depths of the so-called "sexual revolution." One could effectively argue that Milligan's films pack such a remarkable

emotional and narrative punch specifically due to the repressed sexual energy which animates the films, exploding in the screenplay, the performances, and most certainly in Milligan's always-personal roving camera, which is not only the filmmaker's eye, but symbolically the collective eye of the undeclared homosexual, and thus a potentially stark confession from behind the camera. Even Milligan's one famous "gay" film, Vapors, is curiously ambivalent about its purported subject matter, both mocking and trivializing the subject, as if in shame. It appears that Milligan did not have his creative "heart" in his homosexual identity, and by and large considered it peripheral to his creative projects, yet the "gay rage" which exemplifies Milligan comes through loud and clear via the extraordinary energy and poetic wit in his works.

Whereas much is made of Fassbinder's semi-romantic portrayal of society's freaks and outsiders, Milligan's heroes were always outsiders- and often "ugly" from a traditional aesthetic perspective - which is why they are engaging, "hyper-real," even perhaps mythical, certainly more in tune with Sirk's "bigger than life" character philosophy than anyone in Fassbinder's canon. For some, Milligan is ultimately more honest (and arguably more fun) than Fassbinder, who is serious and self-absorbed to a fault. Fassbinder often wears his artistic heart on his sleeve; films such as Fox and His Friends (1974) frankly portray the postwar gay experience as few other artists have dared, and this is laudable. Additionally, Fassbinder successfully aped the look, if not the spirit, of Sirkian melodrama. Milligan, on the other hand, screamed his psycho-sexual angst to the very heavens through his cataclysmic screenplays spouted by hysteria-infected heroes and heroines, and in the process made a cinema which, despite its neurotic genesis and backyard aesthetic, became surely "bigger than life."

4

Vapors

Andy Milligan's first extant film, in which two lonely men have a rendezvous at the famous St. Mark's Baths in lower Manhattan, is a curious combination of underground/ experimental work with an smattering of theatrical pretensions. Considering Milligan's concurrent work at the Caffe Cino, the theatrical emphasis in Vapors is not surprising, and the Cino was instrumental in several other aspects of the film, from the literate if simplistic script by frequent Milligan collaborator Hope Stansbury, to the appearance of several Cino performers, including Gerald Jacuzzo and Haal Borske, both of who would become significant parts of Milligan's film ensemble cast.

One of the most conspicuous notions in Vapors is the conceit that the film is centered around the early 1960s New York homosexual scene, as the setting is a famous gay hangout, and most of the supporting characters are flamboyantly, even comically "gay" in their behavior. As Milligan himself was gay, this in itself makes sense; yet what is odd about Vapors is that although the two protagonists are ostensibly in a gay environment, theoretically looking for a male-male connection (sexual or otherwise), the bulk of the film takes great pains to present the contemporary homosexual as frivolous, superficial, even cruel. One of the characters eventually dubs the place a "hell for men," and the other soon adds, "You're right ... it is like an insane asylum here!" Vapors is harshly critical of homosexuality, coming across at times as virtually anti-gay, at others strongly ambivalent about the subject, which suggests that the filmmaker himself had his own misgivings, perhaps even some self-loathing about the subject matter.

Yet the inclusion of overtly gay characters in Vapors does signal that Milligan and company were comfortable with adding them to the scenario, and as such characters were still relatively rare in period film, excepting

perhaps the deliberately marginalized underground, Vapors does constitute a cultural text of historical importance. As mentioned previously, the gay underground film movement was hitting its stride during this time period, with artists such as Curtis Harrington, Jack Smith and Kenneth Anger all turning in exemplary work with at least some homosexual overtones. In fact, as Vapors' production and release dates remain obscure, covering everywhere from 1962 to 1965, Milligan may have been a latecomer to the party, as it were, and the cynic might say he was riding the coattails of the aforementioned trailblazers who preceded him.

Vapors' opening titles sequence follows a man (Jacuzzo) as he rides a subway and ends up somewhere in downtown Manhattan, in the dark of night. Accompanied by an anachronistic honky-tonk piano soundtrack, this scene of an anonymous citizen looking for cheap thrills in the dark heart of the big city, conveys both a nostalgia towards the urban entertainment -from vaudeville on upwards- as well as a slightly bemused perspective towards the proverbial "lost soul," his circuitous journey captured well as Milligan's ever-prowling verite camera stalks the faceless protagonist through the inky blackness of the lonely night.

After paying for a cubicle at the St. Marks Baths, and safeguarding his valuables, the young man enters a tiny "private" room, which looks like a cross between a closet and a prison cell, changing from his street clothes into a flimsy white robe, like one might wear in a hospital or other institution. He turns off the light, opens the door and lays down, waiting for the "outside world" to engage him. Soon, several young men who can only be described as "flaming" in their behavior barge into the young man's room, only to summarily reject him as a possible "trick." This casual rejection of one as a possible friend or sex partner probably mirrors the impulsive, superficial nature of homosexual "pick-ups" of the time, and establishes one of Vapors most overt binaries, that of public versus private space. Although the entire bathhouse establishment is in essence a public venue open to all, the little private rooms may be considered an individual's private space, tantamount to one's own domicile. The hallways of the baths, however, are clearly public, in that all of the transient "bathers" prowl them endlessly, looking for possible sexual connections. As will be seen, the activities going on inside

the private room are relatively sedate, mannered and mature, in comparison to the reckless "free for all" which seems to be constantly going on out in the hallway area. And when an occupant of the room leaves his door open, this is a signal that anyone "outside" has permission to venture "inside," the door symbolizing that ever-fragile barrier in the real world between public and private life.

Another, apparently older man (Robert Dahdah) soon enters the cubicle, nervously introducing himself, and the two share an especially awkward first conversation. The older man guilelessly asks the younger, "How do you get to know someone?," certainly an understandable question considering the circumstances, but also a marvelous rhetorical query which underscores the search for companionship and meaning in an invariably lonely "mass" society.

The two men finally introduce each other; the young man is Thomas, and the older one is "Mr. Jaffe." The somewhat formal use of a surname on Jaffe's part is an apparent attempt to distance himself emotionally from the proceedings, and also to conceivably elevate himself above the reckless adolescent flirting which swirls around him, hopefully positioning himself as the "adult" of the group. Thomas next queries Jaffe with what at first appears to be a delusional notion: "Do you get the feeling that someone is watching us?" The viewer may assume that this burst of paranoia covers some social discomfort, guilt over a potential sexual liaison, and perhaps some self-loathing as well. Yet Thomas' intuition proves correct, as Jaffe spots "a hole in the wall with an eye in it," and covers it up to ensure their privacy. Eyes were indeed watching them, through a crudely-gouged hole in the wall (commonly referred to as the "gloryhole)" and textually symbolic in this space as the male anus), and the supposedly sacrosanct division between public and private space, already threatened by the prowling "gang" of gay men in the corridors, is further eroded.

In fact, the dichotomy between public and private space in Vapors also mirrors a most interesting dialectic inherent in the gay community portrayed, and applicable to other oppressed or ostracized social groups who are, for various reasons, disallowed by mainstream society to express themselves

openly, to communicate normally in an accepted social forum. As homosexuality in the early 1960s was still considered an amoral function, an antisocial act, a symptom of mental illness, and in many cases also a crime, those who practiced it had to resort to means other than overt dialogue in which to express their proclivities, and seek out and engage kindred spirits. In short, gays had to come up with an underground, or "secret" means of communication, and to a large degree this eschewed the use of verbal cues, and placed emphasis on non-verbal ones. Certainly, geography was one of the premier non-verbal cues, as men who sought out a noted bathhouse or saloon or gymnasium could be fairly confident that they had located their peers in these prescribed safe places (with the bathhouse in Vapors a fine example). Within this safe environment, as well as in some public settings, further non-verbal cues would signal affinity with other interested parties, these including clothing options, and hand and facial gestures. Other signals, such as the conspicuously open door in Thomas' room, signal a very specific intent to the person outside regarding the person inside. The aforementioned "gloryhole," traditionally used in such settings as both as a surveillance device and a portal for anonymous oral sex, conveys much by its mere presence. Outside, in the hallways, omnipresent graffiti communicates volumes about the ambivalence of its authors without a word being spoken. Also within the space of the bathhouse hallways (a space seen as precariously residing midway between public and private), the gang of predatory pick-up artists are free to finally "use their words" to convey some aspect of their experience; the specific slang terms utilized by them illustrate the curious code, decipherable only to the initiated, which relays notions of import to others of like mind.

Jaffe, for one, seems downright chilled by the revelation of spies in his midst, for he has now become aware that there is a whole subtextual environment existing alongside the superficial one he can perceive, a veritable underground universe of sexual evil which is entirely invisible to him. A mortified Jaffe squeaks, "I've decided I don't like this place at all! It's like a Hell for Men, an insane asylum for mad homosexuals!" One could see Jaffe was uncomfortable in the environment to begin with; this latest revelation seems to cause him genuine discomfort; his derogatory, sexist comment, surely designed to clearly distance himself from those "mad

homosexuals," reveals not only his homophobia, but deep uncertainty about his own motives.

Almost as an apology or confession, Jaffe offers an explanation for his presence here, an explanation as comical as it is pathetic; he decided to visit the most notorious gay bathhouse in New York City in order to get away from his wife. This remarkably feeble excuse raises more questions that it answers, as a hen-pecked husband has many other, less intimate and emotionally upsetting diversions available to him in a big city, such as the movies, the racetrack, the saloon or the brothel, to name but a few. Jaffe obviously ended up at the St. Mark's Baths for some specific reason, as yet unstated.

Jaffe continues on his anti-wife rant, expanding it to include criticism of his life in general -"Getting up, going to work, watching television, going to sleep - that's all I've been doing for years"- a cliche sentiment which was a typical lament of the postwar wage slave in a conformist culture, at least as he appeared as an ubiquitous character in popular culture. Continuing his catalog of complaints against his partner, Jaffe centers on two things- the woman's nightly beauty regimen, which he dismisses as a "face full of lard," and her physical (and obviously emotional) absence, which is nicely symbolized by his description of her leaving his dinner, to be eaten in solitude while she attends club meetings, "wrapped in cellophane paper."

Finally changing the subject, Jaffe eyes Thomas' feet and admires them, asking if he can "do something." The viewer next expects to witness some expression of foot fetishism (kissing, licking, etc.) but instead, Jaffe grabs Thomas' toes, one by one, and recites, "This little piggy went to market..." as a father might do for a small child at bedtime. Thus, Jaffe is revealed as not looking for a sex partner, or even a friend with this casual encounter - he is seeking a surrogate child, his need for which tends to reinforce his description of the barrenness of his marriage.

Thomas, trying to deflect yet another awkward moment, states "I think feet are very important too," and recites how he once could not make love to a young man who had deformed feet, reinforcing the common belief that physical beauty is paramount in casual gay encounters. Jaffe continues to

bash his wife in her absence, declaring that she has the "ugliest feet" he has ever seen; by now it is becoming clear that Jaffe, and perhaps Vapors as well, despises women. Thomas counters how he finds feet sexually stimulating, but Jaffe ignores him and continues his whiny, self-pitying diatribe.

Jaffe next describes an implausible dream wherein his wife's feet become giant, disembodied monsters which try to suffocate him by forcing themselves into the poor man's mouth, a revealing admission which all but confirms Jaffe's sexual loathing for his wife, and perhaps all women. In another revealed dream, his wife throws "balls of solid blood" at Jaffe, apparently an allusion to the woman's menstrual periods, and further conveying Jaffe's distaste for women, and certainly the reproductive process.

Feeling ever more comfortable as he continues to "confess" to Thomas, Jaffe suddenly blurts out, "My son Billy had soft skin," as he kisses Thomas on the forehead, another common gesture of affection from parent to child. Jaffe's motivations now become clear; he visited the baths on the one year anniversary of his son's death, in an apparent attempt to assuage his still-unbearable grief. Jaffe goes on at length about his teenage boy's beauty and aspirations, ruminating endlessly about the lad's "beautiful skin," a most odd comment by a father about his jock son, unless that father had undeclared sexual longing for him. What Jaffe seeks here in the baths, it seems, is a reaffirmation among the gay men of his son's lost youth, beauty and maleness.

According to Jaffe, his son drowned in a lake full of poisonous snakes, a death as horrible as it is unlikely; yet the reference adds to an increasing catalog of vaguely anti-female references in Vapors, as the highly symbolic death of the son alludes to his "sacrifice" to a diabolical "female" force of water and serpents, perhaps even a reincarnation of the dreaded mythical Medusa. Continuing, Jaffe describes the horrific morbidity of the son's funeral, in which the casket was surrounded by "millions of dead flowers." Jaffe claims he destroyed all of the flowers but one-a crepe-paper sunflower, which to him symbolized his son's beauty and life spirit.

Apparently, this disclosure is too much for Jaffe, as he leaves Thomas' room and never returns. Soon, the prowling "mad homosexuals" act as messengers, delivering to Thomas a box from Jaffe, which dutifully contains the son's death symbol -a tacky crepe-paper sunflower. That Jaffe was walking around Manhattan toting this emblem of his son's dead body around with him is patently odd, and even odder is his bequeathing the morbid gift to Thomas, who bursts into tears at the sight of it. Thomas has been touched by Jaffe's grief, feeling it perhaps for the first time as he holds this symbol of the father's loss; it appears that Thomas also feels Jaffe's absence, the loss of a potentially meaningful relationship, so elusive in this "hell for men." Perhaps also, Thomas fancied Jaffe as a surrogate father, and feels his abandonment in a very personal way. In a notorious coda, another young man (alternately identified as Ron Keith or Gary Stone) peeks in the door, and Thomas casually says, "Come on in." The man enters, disrobes, and walks towards the camera with his naked member flapping in the breeze. Thomas has lost his chance for a meaningful human connection - all that is left is vile sex.

Even though it takes place in a gay bath house, whose corridors are haunted by "mad homosexuals," Vapors is not primarily about homosexuality. It is about grief, loneliness and personal identity, and equally addresses man's neurotic attempt to find emotional solace in casual sexual encounter. Vapors also vaguely addresses that obligatory 1960s bugaboo, existential alienation. The entire film takes place in a dark, claustrophobic box, men sitting in little cubicles waiting for happiness, companionship or inspiration, painfully unaware of the irony that they are consciously isolating themselves in these little cells, their "boxes" of personal emotional deficit.

As mentioned, there is an overriding sense of gay self-loathing in Vapors. From the start of the film, when the clerk who takes Thomas' valuables for safekeeping gives him a disgusted look as he slowly licks the envelope, Vapors seems to depict the contemporary gay experience as some sort of "hell for men." The "pansies" in the hallway are portrayed in an almost wholly negative light, and Jaffe declares his homophobia, even in this illadvised setting, loud and clear. In contrast to the relatively pro-gay films of the time, such as Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising and Jack Smith's

Flaming Creatures, Vapors seems embarrassed, apologetic and self-flagellating, even as it takes great pains to show in graphic detail the minutiae of gay courtship. Even the film's title may evoke unflattering images of oversensitive weaklings having highly dramatic fainting spells (i.e., "the vapors").

Vapors vividly juxtaposes the "serious" discussion going on between Thomas and Jaffe, and the ostensibly frivolous banter between the "mad homosexuals" in the hallway. The trio of "pansies," although peripheral to the main scenario and in some ways useful as "filler" to pad out the somewhat threadbare main plot, figure prominently in the course of events. Dashing about wildly and screeching their sad laments to the world, looking alternately angelic and demonic, they seem almost to be a supernatural force, both defiling and protecting the hallowed halls of this damned meeting place for lost souls. In fact, Milligan even saw the trio as analogous to the three witches in Shakespeare's Macbeth, who acted there both as the dens ex machina of events, and also as Greek Chorus, annotating the protagonist's heroic trials.' The trio are the first incarnation of abstract characters used as symbol in the films of Milligan, a trope utilized in most of the subsequent feature films. The trio do seem to have the power of summoning the spirit of male-male camaraderie to all around them - in the finale, after Jaffe has departed, the "magical fairies" implore Thomas to open "the gay box" which contains the sunflower, and this apparently occult action grants Thomas the influence to "summon" a well-endowed visitor to his room for sexual relations.

Vapors also seems determined to shine a conspicuously bad light on specific women, and the female gender in general. The clerk at the bathhouse states, "You can't trust your mother these days...," a derogatory statement which certainly foreshadows the subsequent anti-matriarchal agenda in Milligan's films. Mr. Jaffe spends a great deal of time talking about how distant, unfeeling and physically unappealing his wife is, with her "cold cream" and hair curlers. The "faggots" who prowl the corridors of the baths, acting like women, even referring to each other with feminine labels such as "Sweetie" and "Miss Thing," illustrate a negative, mocking mimicry of the female, even as it is embedded within the male animal. Even the dark,

close structure of the baths themselves, haunted by the "vapors" of hot steam, could be construed as symbolic of a malevolent female womb.

Finally, although it is awkwardly addressed, Vapors contains hints of Milligan's subsequent obsession with sexually twisted power dynamics, a motif which would figure prominently in virtually all of his feature films. Here, there is a tentative but identifiable master-slave relationship going on between Jaffe and Thomas. Although Jaffe appears to be the "stronger" figure, doing most of the talking and physically hovering over Thomas for most of their time together, it is the silent, brooding Thomas who seems to be in charge - his very passivity seems to taunt Jaffe into evermore-nervous confessions of his sins. Thomas' luxuriating, reclining stance suggests that of a resting monarch, over which a nervous servant flutters about, anxious to serve. Jaffe meekly seeks Thomas' permission several times (entering the room) touching his feet, touching his face, fetching a beverage, etc.). It would be a stretch to state that Jaffe and Thomas shared a sado-masochistic relationship, but as for Milligan, he appears to be heading in that direction.

Vapors is of historical interest for many reasons, not the least of which is Milligan's first conspicuous use of several pseudonyms to cover many production roles. Milligan in fact seems to be a "one-man band" regarding Vapors, an exhausting role he would continue with many of his commercial sexploitation and horror films. In addition to directing and photographing Vapors under his own name, he produced and edited it as "Gerald Jackson," did the sets as "Dick Fox," designed costuming as "Raffine," created the make-up as "Walter Moody," recorded the sound as "Joi Gogan," did the lighting as "Bob Vale," and was quite possibly responsible for the titles, too, as "Vic Lawled." Most of these pseudonyms will crop up in future Milligan productions.

Visually, Vapors shows the early promise of Milligan as filmmaker. The film is shot in dark, grainy black and white, a popular format with underground filmmakers of the day; Milligan accents the brooding look of the piece by the inclusion of tight close-ups, often (but not always) shot with a hand-held camera, in some instances creating the "classical" cinema verite style. The quick pace of the film, its apparent spontaneity, are one of the

things which makes the somewhat predictable and tiresome screenplay bearable. This shows Milligan's insistence, even from the start, of doing very few rehearsals, and trying to capture the frank drama the first time. Robert Dahdah recalls Milligan's admonition to his actors vividly: "One take, and get it right."'

Vapors' production history remains somewhat obscure. According to Bill Landis, Milligan claimed that Vapors was shot in 1962, before classic gay underground films like Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising were released.' According to Hal Borske, Vapors was filmed in late 1963 or early 1964, immediately after Milligan had lensed his first feature, Liz, which would be released as The Promiscuous Sex.' Yet Milligan biographer Jimmy McDonough confirms that Vapors had a December 1965 premiere.' So whether Vapors was filmed up to three years before its release, or more currently, remains a matter of conjecture.

Milligan paid Hope Stansbury $200 for the rights to use her script, A Night at the Baths, aka The Sunflower, as the skeleton for his first film project.' To record the proceedings, Milligan stated that he bought an Auricon 16mm newsreel camera from disc jockey Art Ford for "$500? $600?"' The Auricon was a "single-system" format camera, meaning that the audio track was recorded simultaneously with the image, and was therefore "wedded" to the finished film. This made it the favorite of news organizations who needed a convenient way to capture current events, but was not designed for creative films projects. However, this handicap seemed to inspire Milligan to new heights of ingenuity and spontaneity in his productions- as McDonough states, "The Auricon was utterly unsuitable for making feature films, and Milligan would create his best work with it."'

Also according to McDonough, Vapors was first scheduled to premiere in December of 1965, but was raided by police, and was only allowed to be screened after a crude optical mask was added to the sexually explicit finale.' Soon, Vapors was being shown at the Cameo Theater in New York, and played the art- grindhouse circuit for many years. At some point, a print of Vapors found its way to the West Coast, where it played for years on the art-house circuit (with Milligan earning not one penny from any of these

"pirated" showings)." Bill Landis claims that the thief of Vapors was Phil Todaro, a low-level grindhouse theater exhibitor." At any rate, the only extant print of Vapors boasts the aforementioned censor strip, marring an otherwise most amazing film. Regardless of its ultimately inconsequential tampering, Vapors is a most auspicious start for that "mad homosexual" Andy Milligan who, throughout, seemed to have one foot inside that claustrophobic cubicle, shyly disgusted with his sexuality, and the other out in the expansive hallway, barking his misanthropic rants to a horrified world.

5

Lost Souls of Times Square

In the beginning, the area now known as Times Square in New York City was a cabbage patch.' The extraordinary rise, and cataclysmic fall, of Times Square has been the subject of many books, and is a lesson in errant capitalism run amok. How Andy Milligan and his scruffy movie-making peers fit into this unholy cauldron of free enterprise gone wild will become apparent anon, but first a short history of the region, and in particular how the seedier side of the movie business nestled there, may be in order.' The area now known as Times Square, as mentioned, was originally farm land; considering that the locale was known in the 1970s as a world capital for murder, it seems ironic that the place once boasted a giant farm complex called "The Great Kill." Development of the region proceeded slowly, but by the 1700s, a series of roadways had been made, including a main thoroughfare. Eventually called Broadway, this main road went through many name changes, including Great Wagon Way, Great George Street, the Middle Road, the Boulevard, the Rialto, Ladies' Mile, Jarvis's Parade and Bloomingdale Road.'

Yet it wasn't until well into the 19th century that a concerted effort to attract business began to yield tangible results. The region, by now known as Longacre Square, invited the first entertainment-oriented business in 1853. This was the Crystal Palace which, in addition to offering retail goods, featured many exhibitions which offered "gaudy, Coney Island attractions ... an alligator, anaconda, dancing bear and six-legged calf, a fat woman, Lilliputians and giants, and deafening steam calliopes." Although the Crystal Palace was a notable, if prescient start, it wasn't until cigar maker Oscar Hammerstein I decided to expand his fortune that Longacre Square began in earnest to take the form it would keep for the foreseeable future. Hammerstein, now considered "the father of Times Square," opened an entertainment complex called the Olympia in 1895, and it was this

"entertainment catch-all" which started to attract the big crowds to the region.'

According to Carnival Crossroads, an excellent biography of Times Square, the Olympia's original offerings included "a singer, a dancer, a skirt dance, a violinist, a strong man, a female impersonator, a wire artist, aerial gymnasts, triple bar performers, marionettes, acrobats, and, for a macabre feature supposedly as funny as a crutch, a troupe of one-legged acrobatic clowns, all fresh from Europe," as well as "legitimate" plays in the theater section. Yet a series of subsequent theatrical failures at the Olympia bankrupted Hammerstein shortly thereafter. Undaunted, Hammerstein refinanced his enterprises and open new theaters, such as the Victoria, the Republic, and the Paradise Roof Gardens. Hammerstein quickly realized that it was the unseemly vaudeville acts, and not the prestigious plays, which attracted the sustained crowds, so he quickly filled his new theaters with a plethora of these, including strange acts such as "The Vegetable Twins," two-headed freaks, palm readers, and nude models sneakily advertised as "living art studies.'"

Longacre Square thrived during this time, as new theaters sprang up almost overnight. In 1904, publisher Alfred S. Ochs decided to locate the new headquarters for his lucrative New York Times newspaper in the Square. The subsequent Times Tower, which burrowed 50 feet below street level while rising many stories into the sky, heralded a new era for the Square, promising an injection of business success. In honor of Ochs' significant contribution to the Square, Longacre Square was officially renamed "Times Square" on April 13, 1904.6 Still, the "new" Times Square increasingly catered to the prurient interests of tourists and visitors, with vaudeville becoming its stock and trade. Although legitimate theater still appeared on the Square, it fought a losing battle for supremacy with its racier cousin. Yet significantly, the death knell for theater on Broadway was not vaudeville, but a quaint curiosity which began as a throwaway offshoot of the vaudeville phenomenon, and soon blossomed into the premiere entertainment medium of the 20th century. The first known "kinetoscope" was unveiled on Broadway in 1894.' Perhaps the biggest success story regarding this new phenomenon was small-time entrepreneur Adolph Zukor,

who became a partner in a penny arcade on 14th Street, into which he installed one hundred peep shows, machines which showed small silent moving pictures of various activities. By 1907, the hand-cranked movie machines, now dubbed "nickelodeons" due to their price tag, were pulling in an average of two million viewers per diem.' These small films were so successful, for Zukor especially, that he started making longer films to show to larger audiences. Other businessmen quickly followed suit, and by 1910, New York lead the world in the new art of movie-production, boasting such studios as Biograph, Vitagraph, Kalem, and Zukor's "Famous Players."9

By 1912, Zukor had produced his first full-length feature film, Queen Elizabeth, the success of which opened the floodgates for this seductive new diversion called "the movies." Shortly after, Zukor created his own studio, Paramount Pictures, and became one of Hollywood's first movie moguls. Asked at one point about the effect of this onslaught of movies on the legit theater business, Adolph Zukor, boasted confidently, "Show me any other industry that has done so much for Broadway."" Following Zukor's daring move, more theaters designed exclusively for movies were built at Times Square, with the legendary Strand, on Broadway at 47th, opening in 1914. Other theaters which were eventually turned into movie houses included the New theater, the Little theater, the Henry Miller, Winter Garden, the Times Square, the Apollo, the Paramount, the Criterion, the Astor, the Victoria, Loew's State, the Palace, the Forum, and the Rialto."

Thanks to exploitation film historian Eric Schaefer, we can get a glimpse of the grindhouse movie scene in New York in the early days. As early as 1908, movie houses were being targeted for closure by the government for threatening the morals of the community.' As some have noted, however, this government action may have been less due to movie content, and more due to the proximity of theaters to drinking establishments and brothels." A popular New York play entitled Damaged Goods, about a young couple who contract venereal disease, was turned into a movie in 1914, making it one of the earliest exploitation film "hits."" Exploitation titles such as Crusade of the Innocent and Tell Me Why! were being banned in New York circa 1922.15 In 1927, S.S. Millard's Is Your Daughter Safe?, about the white slave traffic and venereal disease, was banned outright in New York City."

An early German exploitation film, The Song of Life, played in New York City in 1931, making it one of the first "all-talking" exploitation films. A knock-off of the popular Damaged Goods called Damaged Lives (1933), was banned in New York for four years."

Other popular grindhouse fodder during this period were exploitation features cranked out by skid row producers such as Willis Kent and Dwain Esper. Kent was responsible for "social expose" films such as Ten Nights in a Barroom (1931, d: William O'Connor) which dealt candidly, if flamboyantly, with the horrors of alcoholism, and Slaves in Bondage (1937, d: Elmer Clifton) which paraphrased the rise and fall of a real-life New York call-girl ring, busted the previous year. Dwain Esper, one of the most notorious figures in the world of fringe cinema, cranked out dozens of exploitation quickies, covering everything from drug abuse (Narcotic, 1933) to mental illness (Maniac, 1934) to lurid tales of backwards native tribal peoples (Forbidden Adventure, 1934).'$ And exploitation wunderkind Kroger Babb soon came along with exploitation hits such as Mom and Dad (1945), notorious for being the first widely-released theatrical film to show actual footage of the birth of a baby.19 In 1937, Mayor La Guardia banned live burlesque in Times Square, paving the way for movie exhibitors to take over all the remaining theaters on the strip.20 Yet "the movies" not only sounded the death knell for legitimate theater in Times Square, but also its closest cousin, vaudeville. The last of the vaudeville shows on Broadway occurred circa 1947, although the spirit of vaudeville surely survived in the form of both the movies and the burlesque which proliferated in the post-war years.21

During the 1950s, the fatal allure of Times Square attracted ever-larger crowds, including both the transient tourist and the chronic habitue, and social problems accrued accordingly, making this decade the most significant, if not the most spectacular, in exacerbating the deterioration of the area. Crime, while an ineffable element in any crowded urban space, flourished during this time period in the Square, which effortlessly attracted both the criminal type and his guileless victim, as stated in this passage from Carnival Crossroads: "During all its years, rural, genteel, de luxe, garish and frenetic, (Times Square) was never wholly innocent of some Thieves'-Lair

taint, either, for while it attracted irresistibly the man with a buck to squander, it also attracted with a sinister fatality the man with no scruples about how he made a buck."22 As James Traub postulates in The Devil's Playground: A Century of Pleasure and Profit in Times Square, "Times Square didn't get appreciably worse over the course of the next decade, but what had been largely subterranean became increasingly visible.""

Along with the first appearance of the soon-ubiquitous "dirty bookstore" during the time period, prostitution became rampant during the era, largely due to the opening of the Port Authority Bus Terminal in 1950 (originally called the Union Bus Station))" an event which apparently increased both the supply of gullible young men and women looking for easy cash, and the tourist with marginal scruples.25 Added to this scurrilous business of selling sex at the lowest possible price to anyone with the ready cash was the migration of the sexually desperate or deviant to the Square, in an earnest if misguided attempt to find some fleeting social connection with others of similar ilk. This phenomenon of picking up strangers for quick sexual liaison, both male-female and male-male, signaled a significant change in the function of Times Square to the lonely masses-from a relatively harmless location for finding cheap entertainment and diversion, to a mecca for seeking social connection in a community where meaningful social contact became ever-more elusive to the average citizen. It is this mercurial combination of reckless entrepreneurship with the fatal desire for socio-sexual release which acted as the trigger for Times Square's subsequent explosion and disintegration, a catastrophe which claimed victims in untold numbers.

Although hard-core drugs such as heroin did not rear their ugly hydra-heads until the early 1960s, kicking an already-precarious sociological situation into high gear, certainly the specter of alcohol and pharmaceuticals such as "speed" greatly increased the frequency and failure of much of this desperate social networking, leading to the first wave of an enervated, diseased population, whose very lifeblood was being drained by the perennial overstimulation of Times Square and its neon-lit siren song 26 The youth of the era were especially attracted to this region where both the best and the worst of modern American society pranced about in an absurd

microcosmic burlesque of the human experience. The labeling or "branding" of the decade's disenfranchised youth, derisively tagged "beatniks," was born and bred in Times Square, thanks to creative souls such as Hubert Huncke, who coined the term "Beat" to describe the jaded, world-weary transients, prostitutes and drug pushers he encountered during his frequent Times Square jaunts." A sensitive soul could not help but see that the Square was attracting and or creating a ever-swelling sea of wasted humanity, a mobile urban mass without a home or moral anchor, the scene a searing indictment of postwar isolationist culture. Another visionary author, John Rechy, in his provocative "City of Night," hauntingly chronicled the tragic yet fatally fascinating denizens of Times Square, and poet-seer Jack Kerouac saw fit to dub them "the children of the sad American paradise." Something grim, perhaps even evil, was happening to Times Square.

Meanwhile, business at Times Square progressed as usual. The theaters had by now almost all been turned into movie houses, many showing second- and third-run films all day and well into the night. These "grind houses," or "grindhouses," have since become legend, a synonym for a conspicuous decline in popular culture since World War II, but also for a fond nostalgia for this same, now-lost period of time, in which an abundance of independent films, shown alongside Hollywood product and foreign films, created a sort of renaissance of cinema in which everything from the highest art to the lowest exploitation could be found within several city blocks. The term "grind house" is apparently a colloquialism, a shortened version of "bump-and-grind house," a slang term for the burlesque theaters which flourished in Times Square (and in all major cities, for that matter), throughout the first half of the 20th century (the "bump and grind" of course referring to the salacious motions of the exotic dancers). However, an alternate genesis of the term is more descriptive of the theaters' actual function as a cultural "machine" of sorts. During their heyday, these theaters showed double- and triple-bills from early morning until late at night, and in many cases on a 24-hour rotation basis. These bills often changed two or three times a week, so one theater could easily show between 8 and 12 different films per week. This astonishingly rapid turnover in product led to the common conception of these houses "grinding" out films like a kitchen machine might grind out so many sausages.

Luckily, the grindhouses' insatiable need for new product benefited the curious and eclectic moviegoer, for he was able to choose from many more films in the Times Square area than conceivably anywhere else in the world, and as mentioned earlier, these films came from many different sources, from the established big-budget Hollywood product to the lower-budget exploitation film, and including obscure foreign film product that was often shown nowhere else but in Times Square, in often extremely brief theatrical runs. The late Bill Landis, who chronicled the Times Square grindhouse phenomenon succinctly in his legendary Sleazoid Express fanzine (and later, books with his wife Michelle Clifford), verified as both moviegoer and projectionist in the area, that more than one cinematic obscurity was granted a theatrical run of one day, before falling into historical oblivion."

It would be impossible to keep track of all the films that were "ground out" of Times Square from the 1950s through the 1970s, the three decades where the grindhouse phenomenon flourished, although several recent reference works have tried. Adding to the confusion in general of attempting to pinpoint each theatrical run at each Times Square movie house is the fact that almost all distributors and exhibitors used title changes to re-release another film, often using several title changes through a film's theatrical career. While many of these re-release titles have surfaced, many more have not, and even with all the internet movie databases supplying critical history of the period, there is still more than one "mystery title" whose source film remains unidentified.

Still, one can uncover isolated glimpses of what one might have seen in Times Square on a certain day. From Carnival Crossroads, there is this intriguing sketch of the marquees which seem to have taken place late in 1958: "Nowadays the crowds along 42nd Street and up Seventh Avenue and Broadway pay to see `Boris Karloff, King of Monsters,' in Haunted Strangler, or Fiend Without Face [sic], called a `Brutal Story of Young Girls.'"" Further on, a laundry list of theater signage is quite revealing: "ELYSIA: VALLEY OF NUDES, MISS BODY BEAUTIFUL, SUPER-SONIC HELL CREATURE, BOMBSHELL, EXPLOSIVE, FIENDISH, FRENZIED, BLOOD CHILLING."30 While this dizzying list indiscriminately juggles film titles with descriptors, it seems to accurately

portray the linguistic onslaught which would assail any baffled passer-by. Excepting the typos in the first quote, it verifies that the 1958 MGM double bill, Fiend Without a Face/The Haunted Strangler, with Boris Karloff, "King of Monsters," was currently showing. What is curious is how the exhibitor in this case added the provocative, and largely misleading tagline, "Brutal Story of Young Girls," which well illustrates grindhouse exhibitors' penchant for reckless, prurient ballyhoo to lure ticket-buyers.

The second list of titles is even more intriguing. Elysia, Valley of the Nudes is a 1934 nudist film (d: Bryan Foy), one of the earliest features in the nudist genre; that it was playing almost twenty five years later shows both the longevity of such product, and the unscrupulous nature of certain exhibitors, who were more than happy to pass off ancient film as new product. (Even more ironic in this case is the fact that Elysia was originally banned in New York City, proving that yesterday's taboo is today's commonplace.)" Miss Body Beautiful is a reissue title for The Body Beautiful, a 1953 melodrama with Robert Clarke and Dolores Fuller. Assuming these two films were joined in a double feature program, undiscerning theater patrons could expect at least to see some conservative female nudity. "Super Sonic Hell Creature" seems at first a delightfully hyperbolic title for some unidentified horror film, but it is actually the advertising tagline for the Japanese science-fiction import, Rodan, the Flying Monster, which was originally released in the U.S. in August 1957. The authors may have chosen just the tagline for their observation due to its capacity to incite, but it is also likely that a Times Square theater was still showing Rodan a year after its premiere, under this bizarre new name, in an attempt to disguise its actual identity-such was the mischievous "bait-and-switch" game going on all the time in grindhouse heaven.

The Grindhouse Follies

During the late 1940s and through the 1950s, sexually-oriented exploitation films for the grindhouse market consisted of four main categories, which overlapped somewhat. Burlesque (i.e., striptease), a male entertainment with a long tradition, was first captured on film for theatrical exhibition in 1947.32 Soon, features showcasing various strip-tease acts

interspersed with comedy and musical interludes were filling grindhouse screens in Times Square and elsewhere. The burlesque "feature" was born circa 1949, likely with Midnight Frolics.33 Exploitation film historian claims that at least fifty burlesque features were produced during the 1950s.34 The two main burlesque film headliners were Lili St. Cyr and Tempest Storm.35 The prolific Tempest Storm was top-billed in the infamous Teaserama (1955, d: Irving Klaw), which would also introduce the world to its most popular pin-up girl: Bettie Page. Other notable burlesque features include Dream Follies (circa 1954, d: Phil Tucker), featuring young comedian Lenny Bruce; Naughty New York (1959, d: Jerald Intrator), produced in Florida by future Kiddie Matinee king K. Gordon Murray; and Naughty Dallas (1964), one of the last burlesque features, produced by Texas-based Larry Buchanan shortly after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

After making a brief ripple in the exploitation pond in the 1930s with films such as the aforementioned Elysia, Valley of the Nudes, the nudist film, depicting "life in the raw" at real-life nudist colonies, resurfaced with a vengeance in the 1950s with The Garden of Eden.36 Shot in Florida in 1954 by film distributor Walter Bibo, this prototypical nudist film was released without incident nationwide, but was banned when it opened in Times Square.37 The Garden of Eden subsequently suffered a protracted New York court battle; the film was eventually ruled as "not obscene" in a landmark 1957 decision which opened the floodgates for similar product.38 The invariably tepid and sexless nudism "documentaries" offered the ticket-buyer what he paid for - nudity - and little else. Most nudist films did not even bother with a plot, being satisfied with showing a day in the life of a particular nudist colony, annotated dryly by a disinterested narrator. It was only when enterprising filmmakers like Doris Wishman and Barry Mahon got into the act did the short-lived genre have some life breathed into it. Doris Wishman, one of few women filmmakers in the exploitation racket, was called "Queen of the Nudies," cranking out films which were attractive, funny, and in some cases quite surreal. Wishman's nudist masterpiece is generally considered to be Nude on the Moon (1960), in which two astronauts travel to Luna only to discover it inhabited by beautiful naked womenj39 Barry Mahon, who began his illustrious exploitation film career

as the agent of an aging Erroll Flynn, covered virtually every subgenre in the exploitation field, among these being several nudist films such as Nudes of Tiger Reef (1965). Mahon's nudist magnum opus is The Beast That Killed Women (1965), in which members of a nudist colony are inexplicably attacked by a rampaging gorilla of unknown origin. Yet the essentially anemic nudist genre finally petered out in the mid-1960s, with Doris Wishman's Blaze Starr Goes Nudist considered one of the last.40

One of the most interesting subgenres which flourished in the 1950s, and well into the 1960s, was the importing of foreign melodramas of a "sexy" nature, which were often dubbed and shortened for U.S. release. In almost all cases, they were graced a provocative new title, and in some cases, nude scenes shot especially for the U.S. market to "sex it up." This subgenre was likely one of the first to successfully cross over from the grindhouse ghetto into mainstream theaters, and it is around this time that many grindhouses specializing in imported films turned into "art houses," in an attempt to garner respectability in the community. Although independent producers had been importing foreign films to the U.S. for theatrical distribution since the dawn of cinema, it may have been the aforementioned Kroger Babb, considered the giant of the exploitation film field, who brought the subgenre into the postwar limelight when he purchased Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman's provocative but tasteful melodrama Summer with Monika (1953), and turned it into a sexploitation potboiler Monika, Story of a Bad Girl. However, it is generally considered that the "wave" of popular foreign imports began in earnest with Roger Vadim's And God Created Woman (1957 U.S. release), which showcased a young and sexy Bridget Bardot as the world's first foreign sexpot.41 The astonishing box office success of this potboiler opened the floodgates for the importing of foreign product of all stripe into American shores. Film historian Eric Shaffer notes a Variety article which claims that "the average foreign film made 60 percent of its revenues in New York."42 Prophetically, Times Square-based distributor William Mishkin, who would soon align with Andy Milligan to create the series of grindhouse shockers which is the subject of this book, was one of the most prolific entrepreneurs to purchase inexpensive foreign product and sex it up via new salacious new titles and added U.S. nude inserts- Mishkin released over 24 foreign films to Times Square grindhouses.43

Finally, exploitation melodramas such as Mom and Dad (1945, d: William Beaudine), which hid prurient subject matter behind a moral or educational facade, continued to flourish during the 1950s, due to re-releases of older films from the 1930s and 1940s, plus new productions by folks such as George Weiss and Kroger Babb and K. Gordon Murray. In fact, the immediate postwar era was a veritable renaissance of the exploitation genre. George Weiss, under his bemusing Screen Classics banner, released some of the most notorious exploitation films of the postwar era. Test Tube Babies (1948) dealt with the provocative new science of artificial insemination, but set aside ample time to show prospective mothers undressing. The Devil's Sleep (1949) starred Charlie Chaplin's ex-wife Lita Grey Chaplin in a wheezy cautionary tale about the hazards of street drugs. Girl Gang (1950) dealt in lurid detail with female juvenile delinquency, but is notorious for its amazingly frank depictions of intravenous drug use. And last but certainly not least, Glen or Glenda (1952), ostensibly a docu-drama about the new phenomenon of sex-change operations, was in fact a showcase for the inimitable talents of skid-row Svengali and cross-dresser supreme, Edward D. Wood, Jr.

As usual, the uncanny Kroger Babb parlayed many fringe subjects into box office winners. He took a threadbare anti-drug film called Wild Weed, and hit the roadshow circuit with it under the far more salacious title She Shoulda Said No (1949, d: Sherman Scott). Babb next purchased hours of color footage of a filmed "passion play," about the life of Jesus Christ and his disciples, which was performed every year in Lawton, Oklahoma. Babb added some wraparound scenes starring his new protege, eight-year-old Ginger Prince, and released the resultant monstrosity as both Prince of Peace and The Lawton Story (1949, d: Harold Daniels).44 Babb then purchased an unsold television pilot featuring famed Hollywood make-up artist Ern Westmore showing his famous beauty secrets to an audience of ecstatic women, filmed a silly melodrama around it, and released the patchwork film as Why Men Leave Home (1951, d: Earle C. Kenton). Finally, Babb attacked the emerging Alcoholics Anonymous movement with a turgid, preachy film called One Too Many (1951, d: Earle C. Kenton), which had the distinction, unheard of in exploitation circles, of featuring Kroger Babb playing himself, shown proudly running his skid-row movie factory, Hallmark Productions.45

Florida producer K. Gordon Murray, who in the 1960s was dubbed "King of the Kiddie Matinee," got his feet wet in the indie film business with the release of foreign melodramas dolled up as grindhouse sexploitation potboilers. By far his biggest exploitation hit was Wasted Lives (1959), which was a retitling of two foreign films: the Italian The Most Wonderful Moment, starring Marcello Mastroianni, which detailed the travails of a young doctor trying to educate the local populace about the advantages of then-radical "natural childbirth" techniques; and Children of Love, a French film concerning a halfway house for young, unwed mothers. Murray added two important sections to these imports; first, a filmed "lecture" by "sexologist" Carlton Howard, who urges theater-goers to purchase two educational booklets for sale in the theater or drive-in lobby: "The Sexual Life of Man" and "The Sexual Life of Women." This shameless on-screen hucksterism was a direct descendant of the live "sex hygiene" lectures promoted by old-time exploiters like Dwain Esper and Kroger Babb, whose pseudonymous "Elliot Forbes" invariably harangued the theater audience into buying sexually-oriented literature which just happened to be available in the lobby. In addition, Murray added a short medical film, purportedly obtained in Cuba, showing in gory, closeup detail the birth of twin babies- in gruesome color! This shocking "double feature" was Murray's first big cinema goldmine, and the considerable proceeds obtained enabled him to purchase a large package of children's fairy tale films from Mexico, an investment which made his fortune.

TOP BOX OFFICE ATTRACTION !
THE MASTER SHOWMAN
GIVES YOU
CAFE SOCIETY
GOES SLUMMING!
In Brilliant
Burlyhue
COLOR
A spicy treat with the girls you meet on 42nd street
Lusty laughs and sultry music
Red-hot entertainment that gives you an intimate back-stage view of the fascinating world of burlesque
Lurid ..... Witty ..... Glamorous
"Naughty NEW YORK"
As Naughty as its Title
Delightful ADULT Divertissement
CAMPAIGN OF
SHOWMANSHIP

Burlesque and striptease films traveled the grindhouse circuit in Times Square and nationwide from around 1946 through the early 1960s. One of many such films was Naughty New York (1959), produced by Florida distributor (and soon-to-be "King of the Kiddie Matinee") K. Gordon Murray (who here modestly calls himself "The Master Showman"), and

capitalizing on the reputation of the Big Apple as a world center for cutting-edge adult entertainment.

A curious subgenre, obviously influenced both by the nationalistic sentiment after World War II, as well as the ready availability of newsreel footage of the global conflict, was the short-lived "atrocity" or "historical" film. In the hands of objective journalists, like the emerging television news industry, a recapping of historical events could be both an entertaining and informative education in lessons learned on both sides, and what to be on guard for in the future. In the hands of ruthless exploitation producers, however, history became just another excuse for a ribald, grotesque and even surreal recounting of crimes purportedly committed by America's collective enemies.46 Films such as Love Life ofAdolph [sic] Hitler (1948), Halfway to Hell (1953), Nightmare in Red China (circa 1955) and Atroci ties of the Orient (1959) combined shock-value newsreel footage, lurid new atrocity footage, and didactic, hyperbolic narration to declare that all foreign nations were godless, barbaric "others," in perennial need of America's harsh but benevolent guiding hand; perhaps unwittingly, the producers of these racist diatribes thus tapped into the xenophobic fervor which defined the 1950s, as exemplified by the spurious "Cold War," in which other nations, the Soviet Union primarily, were seen as suspect, dangerous rivals, to be watched constantly and kept at arm's length. While all of these sexploitation subgenres were fairly tame even by the standards of the day, their promotional campaigns suggested the most salacious, debased entertainment possible, and one might surmise it was only a matter of time before sexploitation product caught up with its more sensational marketing claims.

Postwar Gomorrah

As the 1950s lurched into the 1960s, Times Square had taken on a noticeably praetorian taint. A 1960 New York Times article on the region noted, "The ten `grinder' theaters on the block showing racy or violent films from eight A.M. to four A.M., and the `male perverts' who `misbehave' during the shows; the homosexuals and transvestites who gathered on the sidewalks."47 (Note the use of "grinder" to describe the grindhouses) which reinforces the aforementioned "sausage grinder" analogy.) Yet so much

happened in the world, the nation, and the city during the 1960s that the lurid Times Square of the 1950s would soon seem as spotless as a small town park. The decade saw radical social upheaval, due to events such as the assassination of JFK, the ever-expanding war in Vietnam, and the painful birth of civil rights, leading to an epidemic of race-oriented riots. The young generation, forging a painful break with their elders, demanded to be heard on the world stage and mounted movements, philosophies and street protests which were impossible to ignore. Struggling to break free of the painful bondage of patriarchy, women gathered momentum in forging gyno-centric agenda into their environments, soon leading to the social philosophy of feminism. Perhaps as an addendum to these radical social movements, but more likely a direct result of their ground-shaking collision, the emergent "Sexual Revolution" promised escape from the punitive Judeo-Christian mentality of sexual relations being the sole property of monogamous, married couples with human procreation on their mind, into the ostensibly freeing, yet demonstrably problematic, dictum "If it feels good, do it," which yet today stands as a fitting epitaph to the old Times Square. Personal sexual freedom, undeniably an inalienable right, merged awkwardly with radical social movements and prurient business interests, to forge what would eventually be little more than the "pornography revolution." Add to this volatile stew the corrupting specter of widely-available recreational drugs, and you have a recipe for sociological disaster, which affected the United States as a whole, but was acted out in sharp relief in most large urban areas, with Times Square being arguably the most vivid and disastrous example.48

By 1966, vending machine operator Martin Hodas had converted a group of old film machines into the legendary "peep show," loading them with short films featuring limited sexual activity but liberal nudity. These were distributed to "adult bookstores" in Times Square, an act which may historically stand as the birth of modern pornography.49 The earliest "peep shows" primarily featured "nature studies" of women (and presumably men in other outlets) stripping indoors and "sunbathing" (nude, of course) outdoors, but by the mid-1960s, overt sexual content was added, including female masturbation and simulated coitus; by the late 1960s, the films had begun to depict actual sexual activity, including intercourse, fellatio and cunnilingus.

At roughly the same time, the commercial films being shown at Times Square grindhouses were becoming ever-more daring. The sexploitation genre took a huge leap towards mainstream respectability with the emergence of the "nudie cutie," circa 1959, where nude photography of women was interwoven, at least superficially, into a narrative plot of sorts. The soon-legendary Russ Meyer brought some much-needed class, along with an unabashed mammary fetishism to the grindhouse genre with his The Immoral Mr. Teas (1959), which cost $12,000 to produce and was an immediate smash hit. The skimpy plot detailed the adventures of a lucky fellow who miraculously becomes able to see through women's clothing. Another early example was Ronnie Ashcroft's Revenge of the Virgins (circa 1959), wherein a group of prospectors in the Wild West are accosted, and eventually conquered, by a gang of topless Native American warrior-women. Producer David Friedman and director Herschell G. Lewis soon jumped on the bandwagon with The Adventures of Lucky Pierre (1961), a patchwork monstrosity which stole the format of the Meyer film intact. Harry Novak, another prolific sexploitation distributor whose remarkable career eventually contained over 200 exploitation films, started his career with two nudie-cuties: Knockers Up (1963), featuring risque nightclub comedienne and recording star Rusty Warren, and Kiss Me Quick (1964), considered by many the quintessential nudie-cutie, which successfully merged comedy, sex and horror elements into a most amazing grindhouse anomaly.50 The nudie-cutie genre flourished for four years, in both urban grindhouse and rural "adults only" theater settings, and with every new release, it seemed, the depiction of female nudity became more liberal and daring. Interestingly, the films featured women as primarily happy and autonomous, although undeniably as sexual objects for male contemplation. Nudiecutie women were adored in traditional voyeuristic fashion by one or more bumbling male dolts, who cannily reflected the psyche of the male theater audience. Nudie-cuties usually boasted a comedic element, and were rigidly devoid of overt sexual content -voyeurism and adoration of the female form was the sole focus of this remarkably innocent genre.51

Alongside the nudie-cutie were other subgenres of sexploitation. One of these harnessed a loose narrative to sexually-oriented situations, some of a rather daring nature. Some of these films attempted to legitimize themselves

by attaching themselves to current events and/or "classical" literature. When a teenage call girl revealed the intimacies of her indiscretions with members of British government, including the middle-aged Secretary of War, the resultant furor fueled at least two sexploitation films, The Christine Keeler Affair (circa 1963) and The Naked Tales of Christine Keeler (circa 1964). The aforementioned Barry Mahon made his fortune when he stumbled upon the surefire sexploitation formula inherent in bringing raunchy books to life, via his infamous "Fanny Hill" features. Yet perhaps the missing link between the relatively benign sexploitation films of the early 1960s, and the harsh brethren which were soon to follow, were the "mondo" movies, which began in earnest in 1962 with the sensational release of Gualtiero Jacopetti's Mondo Cane. This, and the dozens of similar films which followed, were purported documentaries chronicling the strange and bizarre customs of foreign lands and their primitive peoples. The documentary nature of the films was highly suspect, and more than one confession has come forth of filmmakers doctoring, or completely fabricating, scenes for maximum visual impact. For shock value was the "mondo" genre's cardinal element. Despite their pretense to being something radically new, the "mondo" films were essentially exploitation travelogues, allowing the viewer to visit strange lands and cultures he would never stumble upon at home. They owed a lot to the carnival freak shows, and the "goona-goona" jungle pictures of yesteryear and most were, by nature, ethno-centric, when not outright racist.12

The easily-jaded sexploitation audience soon got its fill of these still rather tame forms of prurient entertainment, and circa 1964 a new sexploitation genre emerged, loosely referred to as the "roughie." This new subgenre, inaugurated by films such as such as White Slaves of Chinatown (1964, d: Jerald Intrator), The Defilers (1965, d: Lee Frost) and Body of a Female (1965, d: Mike Findlay), added what was apparently an essential ingredient to the erotic quotient of any self-respecting sex film: violence towards women. It seemed that the women who frolicked largely without repercussion in the comparatively carefree nudist films and nudie-cuties, were now being "punished" for the collective sins of enjoying sexuality, and an even worse crime, arousing the passions of the male audience. As Eddie

Muller and Daniel Faris postulate in their vital history of the period, Grindhouse: The Forbidden World of Adults Only Cinema:

> From the vantage point of the politically correct 1990s, it's tempting to brand these films as the product of a misogynistic patriarchy punishing women for daring to assume a larger role in society. It's a tough argument to refute on face value, when you stack up the hundreds of rapes, beatings, and whippings that filled grindhouse screens between 1964 and 1970.53

The "roughies" were an even more hardy, if deplorable genre than those which went before, and the collection boasts some veritable legends in terms of extreme on-screen cruelty towards women, and far, far, less often, to men. Two notable subsets of the roughie phenomenon were films dubbed "kinkies" and "ghoulies. "Kinkies" fixated on fetishistic sex practices, including bondage, torture and sado-masochistic practices. This subgenre offered sustained scenes of sadistic torture of women, along with highly fetishized submission and domination scenes. Women were both the victim and the instigator of the torture, with male guilt as a major subtext throughout. "Ghoulies" added outright torture, mutilation and dismemberment, often within a supernatural theme, to its catalog of vicarious cinematic thrills. Perhaps the preeminent "ghoulie" is Blood Feast (1963), a curiously still-born, albeit gory film which opened the door to the 1960s wave of "gore" films. This film graphically depicted the gruesome slaughter of (primarily) women, obsessing on misogynist fantasies such as lingering, torturous dismemberment. Blood Feast was produced by David F. Friedman who, if nothing else, certainly had his finger on the grindhouse audience's pulse.54

Other entrepreneurs who flourished in this period with "strong" (i.e., lewd and/or violent) sexploitation films were filmmakers such as the prolific Barry Mahon, who made the extraordinary The Sex Killer in 1967, seen by some as a foreshadowing of the "slasher" genre of the 1970s. Husband-and-wife filmmaker team Roberta and Mike Findlay were prolific producers of outrageously misogynist ghoulies, including the infamous "Flesh Trilogy" (Touch of Her Flesh, 1967, Curse of Her Flesh, 1968, Kiss of Her Flesh, 1968).55 Skid-row producers such as Joe Sarno, Harry Novak, David R.

Friedman, and William Mishkin also gleefully jumped on the roughie bandwagon. As will be described anon, it is in this era (lasting roughly ten years, with soft-core and hard-core "straight" narrative films somewhat overlapping), that Milligan found his niche in the exploitation film market, and Mishkin would add Andy Milligan to his small stable of film suppliers.

In another curious synchronicity which aided and abetted the emergence of pornography into the cultural mainstream, in 1968 the new MPAA motion pictures ratings system (i.e.) "G," "GP," "R," "X") perhaps unwittingly helped to create that definitive subgenre of motion picture, the "X"-rated feature, which oddly enough was originally given out to films of a violent nature, and only subsequently became a catch-all for sexually-oriented films.56 A Swedish import, I Am Curious (Yellow) (1968, d: Vilgo Sjoman), was one of the first films given the X rating, creating controversy (and much-needed free publicity) when it was deemed obscene by the courts, a move which ironically ensured that this new sexual genre would flourish at the box office. The influence of this Swedish bombshell on the industry was immediate: circa 1969 all sex films, whether foreign or domestic, tried to associate itself in some way with Sweden. Also in 1968, Russ Meyer brought the sex film new legitimacy with his beautiful, and wildly popular Vixens' Many mainstream Hollywood films initially jumped on the short-lived "X"-rated bandwagon as well, with mainstream box office successes such as Midnight Cowboy (1969, d: John Schlesinger), Beyond the Valley of the Dolls (1970, d: Russ Meyer), Myra Breckenridge (1970, d: Michael Sarne), andA Clockwork Orange (1971, d: Stanley Kubrick). The studios soon eschewed this category of film as being antithetical to their desired image of wholesome family entertainment, as well as not envying being tossed in the same barrel with scruffy foreign and independent product.

One of the more curious independent sexploitation subgenres of this time period was a revisiting of the "drug scare" film, first made popular in the 1930s with such legends as Reefer Madness (1936, d: Louis Gasnier) and Narcotic (1933, d: Dwain Esper). This new resurgence of anti-drug films by-and-large attempted to demonize the hippie/free love movement, and once again tried to portray such harmless recreational drugs such as marijuana as veritable poison from the pits of Hades." Titles such as Love In '72, Wild

Hippy Orgy and Evil Pleasure existed solely to cash in on the fascination/fear of the drug-and-free love-obsessed youth movement, yet others of the era took a more level-headed approach. For instance, Something's Happening (1967, d: Edgar Beatty) is a fascinating, quasidocumentary look at the youth movement, focusing primarily on hippie communes and mass gatherings (or "love-ins"), yet due to its inherent curiosity value, Something's Happening proved extremely popular on the grindhouse circuit, and was re-released under at least two other highly exploitative titles, The Hippie Revolt and World of Acid. Yet perhaps the brightest and most poignant example of this quaint subgenre is Sign ofAquarius (1970, d: Robert J. Emery), a lurid melodrama filmed in the streets of Cleveland, Ohio, which paints a grim, and likely accurate picture of the hippie commune of the day, comprised primarily of bums, neurotics and thrill-seekers, most of whom also happen to be drug addicts. It is a shame that this rather amazing film was hijacked by unscrupulous producers (as were many such films) and marketed as pure sexploitation under an absurd new title, Ghetto Freaks, where it was all but certain to elude its rightful audience.

As the tumultuous 1960s finally crawled to its climax, another specter was on the horizon, which promised to top even the raciest sex feature of that decade: graphically depicted sexual activity. Among the first features to contain graphic (soon labeled "hard-core") sexual activity were Mona, the Virgin Nymph (1970, d: Michael Benveniste, Howard Zeihm) and Sex U.S.A. (1970, d: Gerard Damiano), but these and other early hard-core features were quarantined in the sexploitation ghetto until various organized crime elements, emboldened by their successful entry into the pornographic peepshow business, also bullied their way into the mainstream cinema marketplace with Deep Throat (1972, d: Gerard Damiano), featuring actress Linda Marchiano. Using a hackneyed plot device, largely borrowed from Osco's Mona, Deep Throat concerned a woman who, through some cruel trick of a womanhating god, could only achieve sexual release by virtually suffocating on a male phallus; how convenient that this infantile expositional conceit also served an ubiquitous male fantasy.

Filmmaker Damiano had gotten his feet wet in the hard-core sex genre with Sex U.S.A. (1970), a ridiculous staged "conference" of sexual libertarians sprinkled with random scenes of hard-core action, including Harry Reems and Linda Marchiano ("aka Linda Lovelace"), both uncredited. Although all but forgotten today, Sex U.S.A. was historically important, as it suffered many freedom-of-speech battles in its sporadic nationwide release, paving the way for Deep Throat and others to enter the marketplace relatively unmolested.59

Deep Throat premiered at the infamous World theater (discussed below), in late 1972, and was subsequently "busted" in a high-profile battle which did little more than increase the public's desire to see the film. Seeing Deep Throat soon became a cause celebre, and before the end of the year was out, critic Vincent Canby had codifed the notable popularity of mainstream pornographic films with the coy term "porno chic."" A most curious reaction to this assault on mass culture and good taste, the public and media at first embraced this apparent expression of sexual freedom in America, and for a short while, hard-core features were readily embraced by the general movie-going public, and were reviewed in both print and broadcast media. It became "chic" to have survived a hard-core feature and lived to tell about it. This infatuation was short-lived, however, as the die-hard male patrons of sexually-oriented films were actually scared away by the insurgence of "normal" couples into their taboo lair; the large number of male-female couples who originally trekked to this newest "curiosity" dwindled rapidly when the vapid and sexist nature of the films unabashedly reared their ugly heads. As sexologist Grady D. Turner succinctly states:

> While their trek to see Deep Throat and other films may have been inspired by their commitment to the sexual revolution, many women left the theater rejecting a model of sexual liberation so blatantly centered on male gratification. It was not difficult to see porn as the very epitome of the patriarchal abuse of women's sexuality."

Although most of these films boasted horrendous, grade-Z production values, there was a brief flirtation with the "art porno" film, wherein directors such as Gerard Damiano (Memories Within Miss Aggie, 1974),

Alex de Renzy (Sweet Agony, 1974) and Radley Metzger (The Opening of Misty Beethoven, 1976) created relatively well-crafted sex features, alongside such notorious fare as Last Tango in Paris (1972; d: Bernardo Bertolucci).62 Damiano, for his part, followed up his Deep Throat notoriety with The Devil in Miss Jones (1973), considered the first "artistic" hard-core film. Although woefully lacking in overall aesthetic value, considering the genre into which it was forced, The Devil in Miss Jones does boast several artful moments, and at least the pretense of intelligent scripting.63 Less aestheticallyinclined filmmakers, such as the infamous San Francisco pornographers Jim & Artie Mitchell, brought out painfully threadbare yet still wildly successful "pseudo-art" films such as Behind the Green Door (1972) and Sodom and Gomorrah: The Last Seven Days (1975). Even early sexploitation pioneer Doris Wishman (Bad Girls Go to Hell, 1968) made several hard-core porn films, under pseudonyms.64

Inevitably, the general public's interest soon waned in seeing gigantic blow-ups of ugly people engaged in sexual intercourse, and the hard-core sex film market soon returned to the sexploitation ghetto where it belonged. This was probably overall welcomed by its creators, who never had their heart in all the fancy sets and expensive shooting locations and elaborate scripts which some of the early XXX films attempted. The big money, they knew, came from offering the primarily male audience what they paid for: endless depictions of sex. Even porn actress Vanessa del Rio chimed in against the short-lived "art porno" movement with this imbecilic observation: "It jars the attention when drama is mixed with hard core sex," clearly revealing that the real "purpose" of pornography is as male masturbatory aid.65 Circa 1975, the hard-core feature industry had by and large dropped the pretense to either art or entertainment, retaining just the skeleton of a plot to keep the films hopping from one sexual situation to another for an hour or so. In this way, the modern hard-core film adhered very closely to the old "nudie cutie" genre, which used narrative solely as an "excuse" for the periodic display of sexual titillation. Most emblematic of this trend were the notorious "one day wonders," hour-long sex films shot on 16mm film with minimal budgets, often filmed in their entirety during one long shooting day; these low-rent features were usually unspooled at storefront theaters which were often little more than abandoned retail spaces

outfitted with folding chairs and a projector. Also circa 1975, the home video cassette recorder ("VCR") was introduced, an early sign of the eventual death-knell of both the theatrical pornographic film, and the grindhouse film industry in general.66

Yet as surprising at it seems in retrospect, during its short-lived heyday there were avowed champions of mainstream theatrical pornography. One of the more amusing is William Rotsler, who in his 1973 paperback book for Penthouse magazine, Contemporary Erotic Cinema, acts as shameless apologist for the porno film industry. Rotsler waxes effusively on the grand potential of pornography not only to cure all of society's ills, but to become a new art form, a naive notion which many at the time shared. He even more bewilderingly states that mainstream porno is good for society, primarily because it sanctions public masturbation, allowing men to achieve sexual release "at far less cost than a whore."67 Here, Rotsler echoes the general consensus by the industry, and obviously many of its customers, that pornography's main function is to offer easy and ubiquitous access for males to pleasure themselves, which according to patriarchal society, is an inalienable right. This ludicrous adolescent slant on a profound cultural development would be laughable, were it not the opinion held by many pundits, even today. That this same industry was the cause of so much crime, disease, abuse, addiction, and other assorted social ills, leading to the veritable collapse of whole cities and the downfall of innumerable individuals both male and female, seems unimportant as long as men can jerk off at will. In all fairness, Rotsler was first and foremost a sexploitation filmmaker, responsible for some of the most boring and pretentious films in the genre (Agony of Love,1966; Mantis in Lace, 1968, et al.). Rotsler made films which had the production values of a fairly respectable Hollywood film, yet had none of the art or aesthetic which made the best of those films classics. A common fault of pornographers is to confuse budget with quality, and style with content. It is clear that Rotsler for one took himself very seriously, as both a producer and consumer of mass sexual release for men, so it is not surprising that he holds such a myopic, infantile view of the whole phenomenon. As might be expected, Rotsler insists that the women who act like trained seals in porno movies are happy, liberal, carefree "chicks" who just love sex, and the harmless adventure of performing in

public for men.68 No mention is made of the devastating social and economic pressures on the largely poor and out-of-work females who ended up performing sex for a male audience, nor of the tragic pile of human wreckage such participation soon created. To Rotsler and the industry in general, women are not merely sexual objects, but willing participants in their own public degradation, and happier for the experience. But no amount of revisionist apologetics can hide the fact that the real audience for pornography, since its inception and continuing to this day, consists of forlorn, disturbed males with severe sexual neuroses. As sexploitation maven David Friedman himself admitted, not without a hint of personal guilt, his fortune in the business was due to a desolate ocean of "very lonely men."69

Other Times Square theater screens, of course, unspooled "normal" entertainment fare, with "extreme" horror films being by far the most popular genre following the pornographic feature, and it was here where Andy Milligan made his biggest mark (financially speaking) in the New York grindhouse marketplace, with box office hits such as Torture Dungeon (1970), Man with Two Heads (1972), and Blood (1974). Allied with the trend towards increasingly gory melodramas was a resurrection of the "mondo" world documentary genre of the mid-1960s. In the post-porno reincarnation of this scruffy genre, films such as ShockingAsia (Hong Kong/Germany, 1984 U.S. release, d: Rolf Olsen), Mondo Magic (original production: Magia nuda, Italy, 1977 U.S. release, d: Alfredo Castiglione, Angelo Castiglione, Guido Guerrasio), and Savage Man, Savage Beast (original production: Ultime grida dalla savana, Italy, 1981 U.S. release, d: Antonio Climati, Mario Morra) took the template of the earlier mondo films, purporting to show "strange practices and rituals around the world," and spiced it up with an extraordinary amount of gore and bloodletting. The viewer may have assumed (and hoped) that the numerous castrations, beheadings, dismemberments, burnings and other assorted "sacrifices" of societal "others" depicted in these gruesome neo-travelogues were cleverly faked by the filmmakers, but the effect was still one of shock and disgust, as the gore was casually juxtaposed against clearly authentic scenes in what were ostensibly documentary pieces, giving the violence a disturbing air of potential authenticity.70

The inevitable merging of sex and violence into one unholy cultural stew came with the highly debated phenomenon of the so-called "snuff film," a label applied to instances of outlaw cinema which purportedly filmed not only the sexual subjugation and torture, but murder of one or more (by definition unwilling) participants. There are adherents to the theory that this darkest subsidiary of the film underground did (and possibly still does) exist, and still others who insist that the "snuff film" is merely one of postwar culture's more cryptic urban legends. As the producers and consumers of such diabolical cultural product are likely not forthcoming with their testimony, the actuality of this genre remains an historical question mark even today. Yet the grim popularity of the notion at the time can clearly be seen in the tendency of post-porno "mondo" movies, such as the abovementioned, to showcase the bloody death of one or more of the characters, filmed as realistically as possible. And who can definitively state that within the entire mondo-gore canon of the 1970s and early 1980s, among all of the expertly-faked death scenes, was not at least one actual filming of a real-life murder?

It was inevitable that the "grindhouse gang" would capitalize on this dark trend, albeit in a completely disingenuous way. The prolific Mike Findlay (1938-1977), mentioned earlier regarding the "roughie" sex films he and then-wife Roberta made in the mid-1960s, had lensed an unremarkable drug gang caper in Argentina called Slaughter, which remained unreleased until grindhouse distributor Allan Shackleton added some wraparound scenes which ostensibly annotated the source film. The climax of the resultant "hybrid" consisted of the supposed producers of the main film deciding to murder the lead actress in order to increase subsequent box office potential. Of course, the butchering of the starlet, while disturbing, is all too obviously faked, in the Grand Guignol tradition of Andy Milligan and Herschell Gordon Lewis, but this conceit doesn't make the film ultimately any less loathsome. The film was cynically entitled Snuff (1976), and saddled with the inflammatory and highly suggestive advertising tagline "Filmed in South America, where life is cheap!"" When released to the grindhouse circuit, Snuff caused as much controversy as if it depicted the real thing. Feminist groups, especially, took great offense to the brazen exploitation of pre sumed female murder, and rightly so, but their sustained protests outside of theaters

exhibiting the film did little other than bolster audience attendance and give the notoriously cheap Shackleton abundant publicity which otherwise would have cost them a small fortune. The only small comfort which feminists and other human rights advocates could eventually claim was in Mike Findlay's gruesome, highly symbolic death - on May 16, 1977, Findlay was beheaded by the malfunctioning blade of a helicopter, on the roof of the iconic Pan Am Building, in the very heart of his beloved New York City.72 Had the gory event been coincidentally filmed, Findlay would have ended up as the ironic star of his own personal "snuff film."

The Dirty Business

Paralleling the accelerating liberalism in theatrical entertainment, other businesses in Times Square (and certainly in other large urban areas) ventured compulsively into greater exploitation, acting as the virtual shadow of their quasi-legitimate grindhouse brethren. As mentioned, the filmed "peep show" had reared its head in the Square circa 1966, shortly after the sexploitation "roughie" genre had begun to appear on theater screens. Simultaneous with all this were a series of decisions extending First Amendment protections to explicit sexual materials issued by the Supreme Court.73 Although perhaps well-intentioned, these decisions in effect offered carte blanche to all sexploitation enterprises, and this is what historians agree was the ignition point of Times Square's rapid decline. By as early as 1967, the dirty bookstores were carrying what could safely be called "pornography."74 By 1968, organized crime had officially taken over many key Times Square business interests, and the area was thus on a slippery slope towards the mecca of pornography and debasement it would soon become.75

Although this proliferation of sexually-oriented consumer product overtook the region in a way not seen before or since, New York had a long precedent in producing what could be construed as "dirty books" and such. As early as the 1850s there are documents showing the existence of pornographic drawings and photographs sold out of the back of saloons and men's clubs.76 Enterprising Gotham-based publishers such as Sam Roth forged lucrative careers by distributing adult reading material of both

domestic and European origin. PostWorld War II, movie memorabilia merchant Irving Klaw, working out of a small lowerManhattan storefront, became a leading producer of erotic "fetish" photography, including much s/m material, using iconic models such as Bettie Page and Lili St. Cyr.77 Other "fetish" publications which flourished during this time were John Willie's illustrated s/m magazine Bizarre, and Leonard Burtman's Exotique. Burtman would in 1960 produce the first "mainstream" s/m feature, Satan in High Heels. "Lon of New York" is credited with creating the first mainstream gay "fetish" magazine, Strength & Health, ostensibly a body-building magazine but featuring art studies of well-muscled men sporting only bikini underwear.78

Yet the proliferation of pornography in a retail environment had never seen the likes of the flood which opened up after the Supreme Court Rulings, and the bold, perhaps even visionary incursion of folks such as Richard Basciano and Martin Hodas. As the 1960s turned into the 1970s, dirty bookstores were ubiquitous, along with a new phenomenon, "massage parlors," which were nothing more than storefront whorehouses. In addition, the precarious line between consumer erotica and prostitution, became ever-thinner due to the emergence in the early 1970s of live sex acts, where "customers paid to watch a man and a woman have sex on a stage tilted toward the audience."79 This line between voyeurism and participation became virtually extinguished in 1972, when "Live Nude Girls" acts first appeared, wherein customers peeked through holes surrounding a tiny cubicle, inside of which female sex workers masturbated.80 The 1970s proceeded apace, with theatrical pornography, retail pornography and rampant prostitution creating an oversexed environment which seemed predicated on the compulsive exploitation of the female. Feminist groups were on record as being appalled, yet it seems curious that the only significant protest against the New York sex industry, headed by Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug and their "Women Against Pornography" organization, was mounted at Times Square on October 20, 1979, conspicuously late in that the bounty days of porn in New York City were long past, and the major damage had already been done.81

KENT
KENT
First name for the martini
KRAKATOA EAST OF JAVA
VICTORIA
ALAN ARKIN
P09i

BURLESK
ADULTS ONLY
VIDEO CASSETTES
duro-lite BULBS
SUGA BABES
Flame
STEAKS
TOPLESS

Two similar views of Times Square, taken a decade apart, vividly show how the incursion of pornography mutated the area. The first scene (Memorial Day, 1969) shows mainstream fare such as Popi and Krakatoa, East of Java predominating. The second scene (August 1980) reveals a gaggle of XXX movie palaces, including the famed Pussycat Theatre, showing films like Small Town Girls and Sweet Dreams, Suzan, beside adult video cassette outlets and topless bars.

The Theaters of Times Square

Among the more memorable artifacts of Times Square during the heyday of the grindhouse were the theaters themselves, some of which became as famous as the films they played. Theatrical entertainment had been a popular Gotham attraction since its earliest days; even in the early 19th century, New York boasted the more theaters per capita than any similar metropolis.82 The theater business grew exponentially, and became a major New York industry by the end of the 19th century.83 The city's theater district crawled slowly uptown, from the City Hall area (circa 1860), to 14th Street, to 23rd Street, to Herald Square, and finally descending on Times Square in the early 1900s.84 As discussed previously, Oscar Hammerstein, considered "The Father of Times Square," brought the area to life with his Olympia and Victory theaters, built in 1895 and 1899, respectively.85 From roughly 1903 to 1907, almost a dozen more theaters were erected, primarily on 42nd Street.86

Aligned with the "legitimate" theater were the far more popular bawdy entertainment genres such as burlesque and vaudeville, both of which cannily foreshadow the sexual obsessions of the region in the mid-20th century. Exotic dancers such as "Little Egypt" attracted large crowds at the area theaters- soon, burlesque became one of Times Square's main attractions, along with vaudeville variety shows.87 Perhaps the most notorious purveyors of burlesque in the region were the Minsky brothers, who opened several successful houses in the area circa 1927.88 Featuring headliners such as Gypsy Rose Lee and Georgia Southern, the Minsky houses soon threatened to overshadow, in both reputation and box office receipts, their colleagues in the area. Responding to pressure from

community leaders (and undoubtedly jealous rival business owners) Mayor LaGuardia finally took action, and revoked or denied burlesque theater licenses, circa 1937.89 This high-profile, highly publicized assault on area vice received much coverage in the daily press, and became something of a legend, even inspiring a hit movie several decades later, The Night They Raided Minsky's (1968, d: William Friedkin). Yet burlesque survived, during the immediate post-World War II years in the form of burlesque films released to urban grindhouses, and in the 1970s, in the form of strip clubs such as the Metropole and the Melody Burlesk, which merged the art of erotic dance with raunchier "live nude girls" acts.90 In addition, the theater environment, with its large numbers of anonymous patrons was a natural attraction for the art of prostitution, which flourished in and around popular theaters since the industry's genesis. A theater's second balcony, labeled "the third tier," was a common rendezvous point for prostitute and patron, as it was sequestered from the main audience and stage.91 Both male and female prostitutes solicited business in popular New York theaters, and several theaters were physically linked to brothels.92 This tradition was carried intact all the way through the pornography invasion of the 1970s and early 1980s, when scores of drug-addled prostitutes of both genders prowled the aisles, desperately seeking "johns."

Bringing us up to the post-World War II grindhouse era, Bill Landis' and Michelle Clifford's extraordinary book, Sleazoid Express, is a priceless overview of key Times Square grindhouse theaters, chronicling in detail the history of the theaters, the films, the filmmakers and the owners who made such a significant impact on New York and world culture. Landis and Clifford capture the allure of the theater itself, as much a character in the cultural landscape as the movies being shown, and the persons attending, both within and without. The Times Square experience is all of the above, and in many cases, the attendees and the advertising far surpass the entertainment being offered. The vibrant "grand spectacle" implicit in the region, begun by Oscar Hammerstein and maintained throughout its long, checkered career, was alive and well in the late 1950s, as witness this lyrical, if dismissive, description of a marketing stunt for the Times Square opening of Hammer's Horror ofDracula (1958), taken from Rogers and Weston's history of Times Square, Carnival Crossroads: "Or you catch unbelievingly

the smell of horses. The check reins off and heads drooping, a team is halted by the curb, harnessed to a black hearse with festoons of white satin and the solemn adornment of gold tassels, all for another movie, Count Dracula. It's a show for the sake of a show."93

In our discussion of Andy Milligan, the Apollo theater figures prominently. The Apollo was one of several theaters owned by the Brandt family, among a group originally designed for live theatrical performance, that had been built between 1899 and 1920.94 Due to the economic ravages of the Great Depression, these theaters had fallen into default, and were foreclosed en masse in 1933; the Brandt clan took this opportunity to buy the whole passel on the cheap, and from that point on, they were officially "grindhouses."95 Yet from the very beginning of its "second life," the Apollo was designated as an "art house." According to Josh Allen Friedman, one of the first pictures to play there was The Life of Beethoven.96 From that point on, the Apollo became known as the venue where all of the new, arty, "upscale" foreign films played, a reputation it maintained for decades; it became one of the "classiest" theaters in a district with little class to spare. Yet ironically, the Apollo made its mark on culture not for this reason, but because it became renowned as the location for sequestered homosexual liaison during pre-liberation days when gay cruising was still a dangerous, underground illegal activity. No less a source than John Rechy, in his chronicle of the post-war gay experience, City of Night, tells of a "date" with one of his many casual "pick-ups" in which they take in "two sexy foreign films at the Apollo."97 And our hero, Andy Milligan certainly had much to say about the Apollo. As chronicled in Jimmy McDonough's fabulous biography, The Ghastly One, Milligan confirmed that the Apollo was a well-known spot for homosexual pick-ups; Milligan confessed to McDonough that he frequently received oral sex in the Apollo restroom from B-Movie actors as well as "local talent."" Elsewhere, Milligan declares, "I went to all the foreign films. The Apollo was king. It was the art house. It was like a club."99 So significant was the Apollo to the Times Square grindhouse scene, in Sleazoid Express Landis and Clifford devote a great deal of space to the theater and its patrons, describing its spirit in reverent tones: "Among the plushest and quietest of the grindhouses, with comfortable opera seats and old chandeliers, the Apollo has had a history of premiering 42nd Street's

most sexually off-beat fare since the close of the 1950s, and had long attracted an introverted audience engrossed in big-screen voyeurism."'' Landis and Clifford also note a most interesting, yet failed attempt to turn the Apollo into a legit theater circa 1980.101 Even though by the mid-1980s, almost all Times Square theaters, including the Apollo, had become home to the lowest pornographic or exploitation films, attracting thus only the lowest human flotsam, one of the major selling points of "New Times Square" rehabilitation plans was the avowed preservation of what were considered "historic" theaters, and the long-fallen Apollo was proudly listed among those designated for salvation."'

As for the powerful Brandt family, who by many accounts virtually "owned" the Times Square theater district for over almost fifty years, they held so much sway in the area that when the Mayor's Office finally came up with a viable "revitalization" plan for the ailing Deuce in the early 1980s, the Brandts filed a myriad of lawsuits with the City. Although the suits were all eventually thrown out or settled to little advantage of the Brandt family, the accumulative force of these ongoing legal battles effectively held off the onset of the perhapsnecessary, but culturally devastating scrapping of old Times Square for years.'o3

As iconic as the Apollo was the infamous World theater (discussed at length in a chapter on producer William Mishkin), which evolved from a puppet theater to a grindhouse goldmine to producer William Mishkin's "home base" to the site of the world's first mainstream pornographic feature. Other theaters which became notorious as pornographic venues in the 1970s were the Avon 7, the Harem, the Doll, the Harmony Burlesque and the Pussycat Cinemas."' The Harem boasted the dubious distinction of being the only grindhouse to show pornographic features on a non-stop, 24-hour-a-day basis. The Doll made headlines for introducing live sex acts on its stage."' The Harmony Burlesque theater was one of the first theaters to feature porn stars doing live burlesque shows, featuring popular performers such as Tina Russell and Tempest Storm.106 Yet many more theaters did not survive the ravages of economic competition, and the eventual bulldozing of Times Square: the Strand, the Capitol, the Roxy, the Paramount were just some of

the beloved theaters which fell to the brutal exegeses of Times Square's experiment in wayward capitalism.'"

6

The Master Showman

In the expansive, highly competitive post-World War II consumer marketplace, the successful salesman was not merely the person who could take any product and sell it, but could take something strictly odd, lackluster or inferior and make it seem bold, shiny and new. In the world of popular entertainment, this salesman was called a showman. From the traveling carnival to the circus to the burlesque house to the nightclub to the rock concert to the movie theatre, the successful showman not only lured masses of ticket buyers to his attractions, but made them glad they came regardless of the content of the program. Such a showman was William Mishkin, a legend in the field of exploitation films, and perhaps the last of the great movie showmen. For more than thirty years, William Mishkin purchased, produced and distributed over 75 films covering many genres, but primarily focused on the much-maligned sexploitation genre, in which films of a lurid nature were given provocative advertising campaigns to lure the greatest audience possible. In this lost art of grindhouse ballyhoo, Mishkin was a genius, as noted by his peers at the time, and avowed today by his ever-growing fan base.

Thanks to Mishkin's granddaughter, Adrienne, who granted an interview to the online cult cinema site CineFear, some sketchy biographical information on this elusive cultural icon is now available. According to Ms. Mishkin, William Paul Mishkin was born on December 8, 1908, to Russian parents residing in New York. His father, a jeweler, died when he was twelve. After attending Columbia University, Mishkin gained employment in the packaging industry, and married a woman named Elaine in 1940. Mishkin sired two sons, Lewis and Neil; Lewis would eventually follow his father into the motion picture distribution business. Again according to the granddaughter, William Mishkin was not only an industrious but a highly creative individual who, in addition to his work in the movie business, wrote

a novel, painted pictures, and even invented a shorthand system dubbed "Abbreviatrix." Sadly, Mishkin's wife Elaine was stricken with multiple sclerosis in the late 1960s, and was soon paralyzed; from this time until her death in 1996, Mishkin was entirely devoted to her care and comfort.' This personal tragedy goes far to explain both Mishkin's slow withdrawal from film distribution beginning in the 1970s, leaving more of the daily activities of the company to son Lewis, and also puts into perspective some of the renowned shouting matches between father and son, witnessed by several observers.' Surely the ongoing illness of a loved one, combined with accruing business pressures in a rapidly changing market- place, would trigger stress reactions in any group, and the antagonism noted between father and son during this time was surely fueled in part by this familial misfortune.

One of William Mishkin's infamous "fronts" (theater lobby displays), advertising his first original production Violated (circa 1953), probably at the World Theater on 49th Street in Manhattan. The gruesome Violated, considered extremely violent for its time, did depict, in graphic detail, "the

pitfalls of being picked up in New York," those "pitfalls" being rape and murder. The second feature, Secret Scandal, is a retitling of a 1948 exploitation film, Hometown Girl, which Mishkin leased through a convoluted states-rights agreement with a West Coast distributor. Also on the program were two short subjects: Birthday Suit, a striptease reel starring popular burlesque star Lift St. Cyr, and Naked Island, probably a risque travelogue from the 1940s (courtesy The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, Inc.).

Yet in the immediate postwar era, Mishkin's ultimate destiny lay ahead. After working for an as-yet-undetermined film distributor in New York, Mishkin decided in his early 40s to take his gained knowledge and form his own motion picture distribution outfit. Although some sources claim that Mishkin released a French film called Le Visiteur (1946), retitled Tainted in 1950, this has not been verified. It would appear that Mishkin's first verified release was Secret Scandal (circa 1950).3 Thanks to film historian Eric Shaefer, we have documentation of Mishkin's early venture into the "states rights system," a widespread practice in which regional distributors would purchase rights to other producers' films for a given territory and time period. The producer would thus be able to defray the costs of production, and the distributor would be able to lease a film without heavy investment. In his essential Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959 (Duke University Press) 1999), Schaefer details just such a deal between Mishkin and a producer:

For example, the contract between producer Don Kay and distributor William Mishkin for the New York territorial rights on Secret Scandal (aka Hometown Girl, 1949) did not involve a purchase price for the rights. In this case, after recouping double the cost of the prints, Mishkin agreed to pay Kay 65 percent of the gross box office receipts up to $5,000, after which Kay's percentage dropped to 60. Mishkin also agreed to obtain the necessary New York State Censors Seal, the costs to be deducted from the producer's share."4

Following the release of perhaps several such films from other producers, Mishkin's first original production appears to be Violated (1953, d: Walter Strate), filmed in and around Manhattan.' This lurid tale of a serial killer of women who "scalps" his victims was rather grim for its time, and prophesied many of the qualities of the "roughie" sexploitation genre, which would not come into full swing until a decade later. The production boasts location shooting at many familiar Gotham landmarks, including the Staten Island ferry, Bellevue Hospital, and, perhaps inevitably, Times Square; it is in some ways a paean to New York City by a native producer obviously proud of his base of operations. Mishkin even has a small role in the film, as nightclub owner Louis Quinto. Although he hurries through his lines like a novice (or perhaps a money-man with one eye on the clock), Mishkin certainly fits the bill in playing a jaded small-time entrepreneur in the cutthroat Manhattan entertainment business. Violated also features an unusual music score by Tony Mottola, who would soon go on to some fame as a celebrated studio guitarist; Mottola's melancholy solo guitar uncannily captures the creepy sexual angst, and the existential loneliness, inherent to life in the big city.6 The gritty noir quality of Violated's cinematography, the emphasis on identifiable New York locations, and the unerringly dark nature of the scenario, which paints Manhattan as a dangerous, predatory environment full of lurking psychotics, have led some to speculate that aspiring young filmmaker Stanley Kubrick stumbled onto Violated during its lengthy grindhouse run, and was inspired thus to create his remarkably similar Killer's Kiss (1955).

With Violated, Mishkin began to utilize an observation from his previous ventures in the packaging business, where the more attractive boxes sold better, regardless of what was inside. Although he became savvy in production, brokering and distribution of motion pictures, Mishkin was at heart a salesman, and it was with this essential skill in successfully promoting what might be cynically termed "inferior" or at least "pedestrian" product that Mishkin's genius came to the fore. As discussed later, Mishkin had the poet's knack for choosing the perfect title for a film, a skill which soon became almost mythical, and a subject of great envy among his rivals. Additionally, Mishkin worked in tandem with public relations and marketing houses to create memorable, at times even brilliant advertising campaigns,

several of which have become legend in the genre. The posters and newspaper ads for a Mishkin film daringly pushed the envelope of traditional exploitation film advertising, with bold, graphic and lurid images, bursting with raw color and peppered with shocking claims which were considered outrageous even in the admittedly hyperbolic world of exploitation ballyhoo.

But perhaps Mishkin's coup de grace in the promotion department were his infamous "fronts," i.e., the advertising displays at the entrances to the theatres where the pictures were playing. Garish and enormous "fronts" had been in use since the early days of cinema, and in the exploitation field both Dwain Esper and Kroger Babb had created many a memorable front for their exploitation hits such as Forbidden Adventure (1935) and Mom and Dad (1945), respectively. Mishkin's astounding "fronts" may have drawn such attention to them because they did harken back to the early days of exploitation, or because they dared to be as "big" as the ad displays mounted by the big studios for their million-dollar blockbuster productions. A fascinating archive photograph at the Kinsey Institute for Sex, Gender and Reproduction depicts the "front" for Violated, presumably in its first run, with enormous signs and dozens of stills adorning the outer lobby, and curious patrons eyeing them curiously.' This is ballyhoo at the top of its form, and Mishkin is the artist behind it. Viewing one of his renowned "fronts," one can see that Mishkin was first and foremost an ad man, and a great one at that. (This photograph also reveals that Mishkin doubled Violated with his earlier release, Secret Scandal, along with two short subjects, one with popular burlesque artist Lili St Cyr.)

Following the encouraging success of Violated, Mishkin sought out (and possibly produced) several films of the striptease/burlesque genre. These include Burlesque in Harlem (aka Rock & Roll Burlesque, 1954), Ready for a Take-Off (1954, retitled Fig Leaf Frolics), Too Hot to Handle (1955), Strips Around the World (1955) Broadway Burlesque (1957) and perhaps others which are unverified.' The filmed burlesque show was a curious subgenre of the exploitation film industry which started immediately after the end of World War II, with the release of such early efforts as Midnight Frolics (1949, d: Merle Connell). As exploitation film historian Eric

Schaefer has noted, the filmed burlesque show tapped into the growing sexual awareness of the 1950s, embodied by phenomena like Playboy magazine and the Kinsey sexual reports, while simultaneously evoking a sense of nostalgia for live burlesque, which had all but faded from the scene.' Coming as they did while legions of soldiers were returning home from war, it would appear that the burlesque films of the immediate postwar period, at least, catered in large part to lonely, single veterans, uprooted after their traumatic battle experience and in need of easily-accessible sexual thrills. In this way, the burlesque film continued the burlesque tradition in a most concrete way, bringing live vaudeville back to life in a "canned" form which could be unveiled in any community which desired it.

In New York City, Mayor LaGuardia had banned live burlesque circa 1938, so the reemergence of the industry via film some ten years later was at least ironic, if not conspiratorial. As for Mishkin's burlesque releases, his Rock & Roll Burlesque, released in 1954, was a re-titling of a 1950 film, Burlesque in Harlem. The film is a threadbare, extremely primitive depiction of a burlesque show by and for African Americans. The acts include song-anddance numbers, tap dancing, torch songs and two extremely timid faux-stripteases which make the comparable "Caucasian" product of the time look positively daring. There are even a few comedy routines, including one with well-known comic "Pigmeat" Markham, but they are so sloppily executed and badly miked it is all but impossible to appreciate them. The entire film is shot in long, static passages, often in medium or long shot, frustrating any possible audience engagement. It is clear that these acts were filmed after hours in an empty theatre, as there is no audience reaction of any kind. Several quick cutaways to an actual Harlem audience "whooping it up" stand out as jarring reminders of just how sterile the performance footage is. Yet Burlesque in Harlem is fascinating as cultural document, for it is literally a filmed vaudeville show, and as such an important chronicle of the time. Yet when Mishkin slapped the title Rock & Roll Burlesque onto the film in order to cash in on the then-new youth music craze, he likely fooled no one and even more likely angered audience members hoping to see performance of the new pop music, and instead suffering several wheezy R&B numbers.10

A far better offering was Mishkin's release of Too Hot to Handle (1955) d: Lillian Hunt). Too Hot to Handle represents the cream of the crop in burlesque features of the day. It is well-photographed, professionally miked, and contains the better acts of its kind. The director, Lillian Hunt, apparently ran the Follies Theatre in Los Angeles, California, a famous strip club, and thus had access to the most popular entertainers and attractive women who were then on the striptease circuit. According to Eric Schaefer, Hunt directed over ten burlesque films, likely all photographed at her Follies location."

Slim, perky Novita starts things off with a pedestrian yet engaging exotic dance. Next, Jean Carter sings a ridiculous double-entendre song called "Hot Nuts," before doing a striptease, an unusual instance wherein a performer covers two aspects of the burlesque repertoire. Sultry Dixie Evans follows with a high-concept piece in which she pantomimes being interviewed for a job by an (invisible) lecherous producer, and ends up baring herself in order to attain the coveted movie contract. The finale features some truly salacious dancing by one "Patti Waggin," so audience members surely got their money's worth in the titillation department. Yet in line with the genre, the film offers other entertainments, including some perfunctory songs. Yet the most enlightening segments in this, and many other burlesque features, are the comedy segments, which merge the cultural zeitgeist of the time haphazardly with some of the oldest tropes of ancient vaudeville, creating bizarre comic set pieces which may not work as straight comedy, but surely stand as illuminating artifacts from the fringes of popular culture.

Comic Mannie King is featured in two skits; in both, he plays a broadly-drawn "flaming homosexual" in a manner quite similar to Joe Besser's surrealistic portrayal of "Stinky," an obese man-sized toddler, on the first season of the remarkable The Abbott & Costello Show (1952-1954) This crude, even vulgar, portrayal of a "pansy," replete with familiar catchphrases ("Oooh, I oughta give you such a slap!") was likely a common vaudeville character utilized by many performers of the day. In his second skit, King attempts a bit of mathematical tomfoolery ("7 times 13 equals 28") similar to sketches by Abbott & Costello and others, but the trickery is so juvenile, the performance so sloppy, that it fails miserably as comedy, making comparable routines by Abbott & Costello look brilliant. Later, comedian Harry Savoy

plays a bewildered, possibly drunken audience member who wanders onstage on his way to the bathroom, and then proceeds to go into some mildly amusing borschtbelt shenanigans, providing a gentle poke at the lowly grindhouse patron. Yet by far the most conspicuous credit in Too Hot to Handle goes to make-up man, Harry Thomas, who the next year demanded his name be taken off the credits of Edward D. Wood Jr.'s microepic Plan Nine from Outer Space (1959), as Wood refused to entertain any of Thomas' ideas for alien make-up!

In addition to features, several of Mishkin's burlesque releases appear to have been short subjects, so the distributor either rented them out as second features for grindhouse double bills topped by other distributors' product, or perhaps used them as bottoms for double bills of his own. The aforementioned photograph of the "front" for Violated also documents that in this first-run release, Mishkin paired the main feature with three other subjects: Birthday Suit (starring famed burlesque star Lili St. Cyr), Secret Scandal (a feature film) and Naked Island. The use of short subjects, especially of a risque nature, to round out an otherwise lackluster film program was a tactic born in the earliest days of the exploitation roadshow game, where distributors would haul around cans of short subjects (colloquially called "square-up" reels), featuring some degree of nudity, to toss onto a program that was failing at the box office, or causing demands for refunds from ticket-buyers disappointed in the main feature.

Circa 1957, Mishkin started in earnest to make his name in the business- as well as his fortune - by purchasing U.S. distribution rights to European melodramas, primarily from France and Italy, and aggressively marketing them using the skills he would hone to perfection in the 1960s and 1970s with his legendary advertising campaigns. Mishkin, like many other producers and distributors, were undoubtedly emboldened by the success of such imports as Ingmar Bergman's Summer with Monika (1953), which Kroger Babb had turned into a bonafide grindhouse hit as Monika, Story of a Bad Girl (circa 1954 U.S. release), and Roger Vadim's And God Created Woman (1957 U.S. release), which opened the floodgates of foreign imports onto U.S. shores, as well as making sexy young Bridgett Bardot into a bankable postwar sex symbol. Aside from the unverified Tainted, Mishkin's

first foreign release appears to have been Ho sognato it paradiso, a 1949 melodrama from Italy whose title roughly translates into "Dreams of Heaven." Mishkin either dubbed or added subtitles to the film, and released it in 1957 under the melancholy title Streets of Sorrow.

For the next five years, Mishkin released over a dozen European films to the U.S. grindhouse circuit, including Sins of the Flesh (1958; original production: Carcerato, 1951); The Shameless Sex (1959; original production: Wanda la peccatrice, 1952); Illicit Motherhood (1959; original production: Maternite clandestine, 1953); Night Girls (1960; original production: Natlogi betalt, 1957); Vice Dolls (1961; original production: Les clandestines, 1954); Palace of Nudes (also released as Palace of Shame, suggesting that both "hot" and "cold" versions were offered to exhibitors) (1961; original production: Crime au Concert Mayol, 1954); Hotbed of Sin (1961; original production: Boite de nuit, 1951); Love at Night (1961; original production: Impasse des vertus, 1955); Indecent (1962; original production: Schwarze Nylons - Heisse Nachte, 1958); Pleasures and Vices (1962; original production: Gueule d'ange, 1955); Naked in the Wind (1962; original production: L'ile aux femmes nues, 1953). The recent discovery of a full-page advertisement Mishkin placed in Variety in March 1961 sheds further light on his imports during this time, with no less than four films in simultaneous release: Male and Female Since Adam and Eve, an Argentinean film; The Naked and the Wicked, a retitling of Core 'ngrato, a 1951 Italian film; Fever Heat, a retitling of Bob le flambeur, a 1956 French film; and No Morals, a retitling of M'sieur la Caille, a 1955 French film starring international box office star Jeanne Moreau. The ad also verifies that Mishkin released these films in both dubbed and subtitled versions, a revelation which further diminishes the already precarious distinction between the "art house" and the grindhouse.

In addition to these, Mishkin also procured domestic films for distribution. One of Mishkin's most successful early releases of this type was his 1959 double bill, Hoodlum Girls/Teenage Jungle. Mishkin leased both films, likely in another "states rights" deal, from the California-based "Social Service Pictures of Hollywood" for East Coast distribution. This duo of lurid cautionary tales were originally produced and released as an exploitation

double feature back in 1944, as Youth Aflame and Teen Age, respectively. Both films chronicle, via flashback, the downfall of young persons who are lured into criminal activity by lax morals, peer pressure, and negligent parenting. Both films boast gratuitous scenes of underdressed females, especially in several superfluous dance numbers. And one film, Youth Aflame/Hoodlum Girls, even in its original release, was already in essence "recycled." Legendary exploitation producer J.D. Kendis built the flashback framing devices in the aforementioned film as a skeleton upon which to hang footage from two earlier productions: Gambling with Souls (1936) and Slaves in Bondage (1937).12 Contrary to some sources, Social Service Pictures did not add any new footage to these 15-year-old films for the 1959 rerelease. The producers oddly removed most of the sexiest scenes from the original productions, which featured girls prancing about in their underwear. They did, however, retitle the films: the original Youth Aflame became Hoodlum Girls, and Teen Age became Teenage Jungle.13 These new titles were specifically designed to appeal to the post-war "teenage" motion picture market which was then sweeping the nation thanks to distributors like American International Pictures, who for the first time consciously courted the youth market with smash hits like I Was a Teenage Werewolf (1957). After Mishkin secured the East Coast rights to the double bill, he released it to impressive box office returns both in grindhouse and drive-in situations. One can only imagine what the average audience member thought about being shown melodramas dating back to the mid-1930s disguised as "new" features, but such were Mishkin's exemplary marketing skills that this daring swindle did not noticeably diminish box office receipts.

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(BUT EVERY)
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IN THE 25 YEAR HISTORY
OF THE FAMOUS WORLD THEATRE, N.Y.C.
THIS VARIETY REPORT SOON AFTER
THE PICTURE OPENED.
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MALE AND FEMALE since ADAM and EVE
TEMPTATION THRU THE AGES
IN ENGLISH
NOW IN ITS 15th SMASH WEEK
FOR FIGURES, PLEASE CHECK THIS EDITION OF VARIETY
VARIETY
Wednesday, March 1, 1961
Among Other MISHKIN BOX-OFFICE SMASHES Now In Release
IN FRENCH WITH SUBTITLES
MANY MEN on the string ... MANY MEN in her arms!
No Morals
IN ENGLISH
NEVER! NO, NEVER BEFORE SUCH SCENES!
THE NAKED AND THE WICKED
IN FRENCH WITH SUBTITLES
FEVER HEAT
AND COMING SOON IN ENGLISH
MANY WAYS TO SIN...
SUB-DISTRIBUTORS
MANY TERRITORIES STILL OPEN!
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A full-page ad William Mishkin placed in Variety in March 1961 gives insight into his product at the time. There are ads for five concurrent releases, all foreign imports which Mishkin retitled and released in both dubbed and subtitled versions. The ad copy also verifies that from early on, Mishkin was in partnership with Bingo Brandt, owner of the World Theatre, an auspicious business relationship they maintained for decades.

Mishkin's 1962 offering, The Amorous Sex, was one of the oddest cinematic concoctions ever to find its way onto an early 1960s grindhouse screen. The film began life as Sweet Beat (1959), a tame British melodrama about the pop music business, peppered with some corny pre-rock musical numbers. The original producer, Jeff Kruger, added some U.S. concert footage of current "rock and roll" acts (including Fred Parris and the Five Satins singing their hit "In the Still of the Night") to better cater to the teenage market. When Mishkin prepared the film for the U.S. grindhouse market, he ingeniously added three scenes which not only pad Sweet Beat's short running time, but mutate it into a bonafide (if incoherent) sexploitation film. These scenes include two comparatively salacious striptease acts, one by "Delilah," and one by "Miss Jeri Lynn," likely filmed on local burlesque stages. Most interesting, however, is Mishkin-shot footage which expands a beauty contest subplot via a lecherous producer pawing, and partially disrobing, one of the contestants. This wonderfully lurid "insert" captures the true spirit of grindhouse and sexploitation cinema, which above all strove to deliver prurient thrills to an insatiable audience, even if one had to virtually crowbar such scenes into a most unlikely vessel. Mishkin (of course) retitled the finished product to the marketable, if not entirely accurate The Amorous Sex, and released the film under his new corporate banner, Constitution Films, the same company which would soon release the notorious Andy Milligan horror films. (Purportedly) Mishkin "introduced" his new corporate arm, Constitution Films, in a Variety advertisement in 1969, specifically to market the Andy Milligan horror films, but as seen, Mishkin had used the name years before.) 14 In most markets, Mishkin coupled the 64-minute The Amorous Sex with another short import, Traveling Light (1961) U.K.), which featured the popular French dancer "Yannick."

As the film marketplace rapidly evolved in the early 1960s, ever-stronger content was finding its way into the exploitation film genre, and at some point "exploitation" became "sexploitation," with sex being the avowed point of the films. While graphic depiction of sexual intercourse in mainstream cinema was still almost a decade away, sexploitation films began to show increasing nudity, both female and male, but most importantly, the suggestion (at least) of sexual activity, a topic which had been taboo in the nudist, burlesque and nudie-cutie genres. For Mishkin, this

leap into modern times occurred with a film which stands as his biggest money-maker ever: The Orgy atLil's Place (1964) d: Jerald Intrator).'s According to Adrienne Mishkin, this breakthrough film "grossed more than any other film in New York City the week it opened, with the sole exception of the show at Radio City Music Hall.1116 A stunning achievement by any industry standard, Orgy's success signaled two things to Mishkin (and surely any other observant film producer/distributor): sex was "in," and a great title could help catapult a film into the box office stratosphere. In this case, Mishkin credited himself with applying the word "orgy" to a modern sex picture for the first time." Also innovative at the time was the filming of the final reel in color, in an otherwise black and white film, so that the ads could honestly boast, "scenes in blushing COLOR!"

Following the exceptional success of The Orgy at Lil's Place, Mishkin hired director Jerald Intrator to mount another sexploitation quickie. The result, the astounding The Sexperts (1965, full title: The Sexperts: Touched by Temptation) ranks as one of the most memorable, and strangest, sex films ever to come out of New York. The film is a veritable love poem to Manhattan and its environs, with an amazing amount of location shooting giving the film an undeniably Gotham-centric air. Even the opening of the film, announcing "William Mishkin presents," is shot over the Pan Am Building, one of the city's most identifiable modern icons. The story as it unfolds is a typical one, about young girls trying to make it in show business, and instead getting sidetracked by the psycho-sexual underbelly of the metropolis. But unlike the typically punitive morality plays of the genre, in which the heroine(s) get abused, exploited and discarded by a vicious male-dominated industry, the heroines in The Sexperts by and large are happy, liberated women who enjoy the entire experience, even if in the end they opt for another career.

Yet The Sexperts eschews a straight-forward narrative structure for one which is peculiar, even avant-garde. Using a most unusual framing device, the story is "told" by a narrator, who reveals that the unfolding melodrama is in fact a potential screenplay being cobbled together by three filmmakers. This marvelous bit of self-reflexivity is illustrated by frequent cutaways to three hacks sitting around a big desk, hashing out the details of their big new

hit. The audience thus sees this story being "invented" as it goes along, which makes the unfolding scenario quite refreshing, even playful. Another conceit which blurs the distinction between drama and documentary is the fact that as the narrator introduces each main character, he takes great pains to reveal the actor's real name and career highlights.

The fact that The Sexperts was shot silent and narrated might have come as somewhat of a let-down to some theatre patrons, but this was in fact a very common trope of lowbudget sexploitation films of the day. In this case, the conceit works, because it is never forgotten that what the audience is seeing is a fantasy unfolding as it happens. Additionally, the omnipresent narration is so bombastic and enthusiastic, the narrator quickly becomes a character in itself, with revealing insights into both the main characters and the beloved metropolis in which the story unfolds.

The Sexperts boasts that crisp, beautiful black and white cinematography of the period which lends the film a polish belying its meager origins. Especially, the location photography of familiar New York landmarks such as Greenwich Village, the United Nations, the George Washington Bridge, and Fire Island make the film virtually a travelogue to the region (one wonders if the Manhattan-centric focus in The Sexperts was a deliberate attempt to mirror or acknowledge the tourist trade, which was likely a large part of the film's original Times Square audience). In another conceit used by Mishkin and Intrator in their previous collaboration, The Sexperts stops dead in its tracks three times to insert three incongruous nude studies in color. These short snippets of true grindhouse sexual fodder stick out like sore thumbs from the overarching scenario, yet they certainly give the audience what they came for, as three very busty young ladies bump and grind shamelessly for the camera, topless as was the custom at the time. The narrator, tongue fully in cheek, tries to smooth over the abrupt change in the flow of the picture by saying things like "The producer thought the next scene would be much better in color...." According to Michael Bowen, The Sexperts did almost as well as its predecessor, lasting for 18 weeks in its Times Square playdate.

Another of Mishkin's original productions reflects well the changes in sexploitation content occurring in the mid-1960s. Heat of Madness (1966) qualifies as perhaps the archetypal New York-lensed grindhouse roughie, in which the sexploitation content is largely comprised of the portrayal of violence towards women. Heat of Madness shares a great deal with the earlier Mishkin production, Violated (1953), which as mentioned predates the roughie genre by almost a decade, although containing elements which would become a template for the genre. In both films, the perpetrator of violence towards women is a New York-based "artist," specifically a fashion photographer whose mental instability is apparently exacerbated by the constant viewing of attractive females in various stages of undress. The trope of the "neurotic artist" whose inherent mental instability makes him an easy target for sexually-triggered derangement soon became a common, even cliche plot point in the roughie genre (and not coincidentally a metaphor for the collective grindhouse patron). Heat of Madness, although simplistic in scenario as these films invariably are, is overall an impressively-wrought melodrama with strongly-drawn characters and a plausible, if awkward story arc.

In the film, a neurotic artist (Kevin Scott) descends into madness and murder when he takes an assignment to photograph staged scenes of violence. These highly theatrical set pieces, featuring bondage, assault, rape, and whipping, eerily metaphor the grindhouse audience's vicarious experience -as the "photographer" is at first aroused, and soon deranged, by chronic exposure to these textbook sado-masochistic scenes, so to is the audience potentially aroused and unwound by these self-reflexive scenarios. When the deranged photographer finally crows, "Pretending is almost as good as the real thing - sometimes its better!" he clearly echoes the sentiments of the grindhouse audience, whose vicarious taste for violating women, heinous as such fantasy is, can be more readily (and safely) sated through dark cinematic fantasy, rather than in the plotting and performing of such deeds. The other side of this dubious argument is that the constant viewing of sexual violence, rather than squelching such desires in men, in reality fuels such lusts, and may lead mentally unbalanced males to enact these deeds in fact. The soaring rate of sexual crime towards women in urban areas such as New York during this period of time suggests either the

validity of this latter viewpoint, or perhaps signifies nothing more than that this genre of fringe cinema accurately reflected the misogynist sentiments of the community.

With the narrative conceit that the violence in the bulk of Heat of Madness is "simulated," that is, staged, the film attempts to plead innocence to charges of being, at heart, a film about violence to women. This alibi is annulled in the last reel when the "mad artist" crosses the threshold from "dark fantasy" to "sex crime" to stab one of his models (a standout performance by Barbara Ward), and almost kill his sometime-girlfriend (Jennifer Laird). Director Harry Wuest went on to make the fabulously deranged She Mob (1968), considered one of the most outre low-budget sexploitation films ever lensed. Mishkin was obviously proud of Heat of Madness; it is the only extant Mishkin production which boasts a corporate logo, suggesting that Mishkin had high hopes for this, and similar subsequent productions.

It was about at this time when fate interceded and Mishkin met Andy Milligan, who would be his source for many ensuing productions, including his wildly successful incursion into the "extreme horror" genre. According to several sources, this fateful meeting occurred during a distributor's screening of Milligan's Liz, his first venture into feature filmmaking after the relative critical success of his short subject, Vapors (circa 1965). Milligan had invited several New York-based exploitation distributors to view his finished film, and purportedly, only Mishkin expressed any interest. Originally turning it down flat, Milligan persisted, and Mishkin eventually told Milligan that if he were to insert a few scenes of a more "sexy" nature (i.e.) nude scenes), he might be interested in distributing the film." Milligan shot the required footage, and Mishkin purchased the revised film from the filmmaker for $7,500. Mishkin then retitled the film The Promiscuous Sex (he had successfully used that title "formula" before, with The Shameless Sex (1959) and The Amorous Sex (1962), and launched it in the summer of 1967, where it did fantastic business.

Based on the success of The Promiscuous Sex, Mishkin offered Milligan another $7,500, to "make any film he wanted."" Thus began a

Mephistophelean relationship which has reached the status of legend, alongside that of Edward D. Wood, Jr. and Bela Lugosi, in which two partners with arguably opposite agendas used each other to their own ends, creating some remarkable films in the process. Whether Mishkin exploited or aided Milligan is a matter of controversy, yet Mishkin's funding (however minimal) of Milligan's productions did allow the filmmaker to create several highly successful, and extremely memorable films. As discussed at length elsewhere, Mishkin eventually funded ten films of Milligan's, including The Promiscuous Sex, The Naked Witch, Kiss Me! Kiss Me! Kiss Me!, Tricks of the Trade, Gutter Trash, Torture Dungeon, Bloodthirsty Butchers, The Man with Two Heads, The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, and Fleshpots on 42nd Street. Although most of the early sexploitation films are currently lost (most if not all of the prints were destroyed with malice by Mishkin's vengeful son Lewis), the extant horror films are some of Milligan's best and most beloved work, and movie buffs can be thankful that these, too, were not prey to the whims of a miserly solicitor with an axe to grind.

Concurrently with the Milligan films, which were produced between 1967 and 1973, Mishkin, like every other exploitation producer/distributor, was keeping pace with the whims of the marketplace. Stronger and stronger content was being forced almost daily, it seemed, onto the movie screen. One important trend was the emergence of the "roughies," sexually-oriented melodramas which drew a good deal of their prurient impact and narrative energy from violence, sexual and otherwise, doled out to women by angry, frustrated and/or psychotic males. A few of Milligan's lost sexploitation films such as Gutter Trash, Depraved!, The Degenerates and Tricks of the Trade appear, by synopsis description, to fall at least peripherally into the "roughie" category, although without screening the films this is an unverified claim. A few filmmakers, such as the unique man-wife team Michael and Roberta Findley, made their mark on cinema history within the punitive, stifling confines of the "roughie," but Mishkin seems to have by and large bypassed this peculiar, and highly political, subgenre of grindhouse history. A healthier direction by far was taken by the increasingly explicit sexually-focused melodramas being produced in other lands, with Sweden the main trendsetter. The release of I Am Curious (Yellow) in the U.S. in 1969, with

the subsequent scandal of its being banned from exhibition and branded as obscene, opened the floodgates to sexy films from overseas-for a time, exploitation distributors could sell pretty much any film as long as it had the word "Swedish" in the title. In 1970, Mishkin released one of many films that year which rested right on the cusp of "hard core," Sexual Practices in Sweden, purportedly a documentary but in actuality a domestically-produced, narrated travelogue depicting fake "Swedes" in all manner of nudist-camp and sexual frolic.

As seen, one of Mishkin's premiere talents, acknowledged and envied by many in the industry, was his ability to come up with perfect, evocative titles which captured the essence of the film being marketed, while adding a seductive touch which had the allure to tempt even the most skeptical potential patron. Mishkin honed his titling talents with many of his early import releases, which had awkward, literal titles that all but pleaded for new labels. Thus, "Bob the Gambler" became Fever Heat; "Wanda the Sinner" became The Shameless Sex; "Black Stockings, Day & Night" became Indecent; "Island of Bare Women" became Naked in the Wind; and "Mister Callais" became No Morals. Mishkin would apply this talent for perfect titles to all his subsequent efforts, both domestic and imported productions, and he eventually earned a reputation of awe and envy from the exploitation industry for his unerring knack in crafting the most provocative, exciting titles for even the most tawdry film products.20

Mishkin was savvy enough to realize (as did the exploitation film industry) that the same film could be effectively marketed in different territories (or even reissued to the same territory) by simply re-titling it; thus the extraordinary exploitation wonder Fight for Your Life (1977) was also distributed as Staying Alive, Bloodbath at 1313, Held Hostage, Getting Even, I Hate Your Guts, and Fury Road.' Although there are many candidates, Mishkin's crowning achievement in the art of iconic title-making was arguably his brilliant (if somewhat misleading) relabeling of Andy Milligan's tired faux-werewolf opus, Curse of the Full Moon. Seeing that the extant film had little marketing potential, Mishkin ordered Milligan to add several minutes of footage with mice, as rodents were all the rage during the 1971- 1972 movie seasons thanks to box office hits such as Willard (1971)

and Ben (1972). The resulting incomprehensible mess surely baffled grindhouse audiences, but gave birth to a cultfilm legend, and created in the process what is arguably the greatest exploitation film title of all time: The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! Here is ballyhoo at its purest, a lyrical shout to the heavens which resonates on many levels, and in an uncanny way encapsulates the entire era which it inhabits. Like other iconic exploitation film titles, such as Russ Meyer's Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill! (1966), Mishkin's new title immediately becomes greater than the product it is describing, a shining symbol of the carnivalinfluenced exploitation film experience itself. Apparently, even Mishkin's marketing people were swayed by the charms of this poetic title, as they designed a most memorable logo for it, used in both the advertising campaign and on the actual film's main title card. As all producers know, a good title is worth its weight in gold, and Mishkin's feverish scribbling on a legal pad at the kitchen table were consistently the stuff of genius.

There is an excellent section within Jimmy McDonough's biography of Andy Milligan which depicts the vintage Times Square grindhouse scene; in it is noted the virtually incestuous relationship between Mishkin, Jean Goldwurm and Felix Bilgrey (owner and operator, respectively), of the World Theatre at 153 West 49th Street.22 The infamous World Theatre opened in 1914, as the Punch & Judy Theatre, and operated as a legitimate theatre, with varying success, through 1932. The next year, the theatre became for the first time a movie house, and its name was soon changed to the Westminster Theatre, where British films were featured. In 1936, the name was changed again, to the World, and it began its long life as a venue for new foreign films, plus second-run and poverty row domestic releases .2' The World was the first U.S. theatre to show many important foreign films; this included Roberto Rossellini's groundbreaking neo-realist drama, Open City (U.S. opening, February 1946), which had a legendary year-long run at the World, credited by historians with making the film a cinema classic.24 (It would also appear that during most if not all of his career, Mishkin maintained headquarters in the heart of Times Square, a short walk from his beloved "World.")25

It would appear that once Mishkin entered the business, circa 1949, many if not most of his new releases ran at the relatively small (299 seats) World Theatre. This observation is reinforced elsewhere in the historical record: Mishkin's inaugural production, Violated, opened at the World, according to a Variety review26; as mentioned, the 1961 ad which Mishkin placed in Variety boasts of his new release Male and Female Since Adam and Eve having broken all previous box office records at the World; in the insightful liner notes to Retro Seduction's DVD release of The Sexperts: Touched by Temptation (1965), Michael Bowen reveals that the film ran for an impressive 18 weeks at the World'; the first Mishkin/ Milligan collaboration, The Promiscuous Sex (1967), ran for an astonishing six months at the World"; in McDonough's biography of Milligan, Lewis Mishkin stated that Sexual Practices in Sweden (1970) also ran at the World.29 It seems that a majority of Mishkin's biggest hits played at the World. Competitors such as David P. Friedman observed with chagrin that Mishkin had some sort of "sweetheart deal" with the World, as he and other exploitation distributors could rarely get playdates at the coveted site, whereas Mishkin films played there almost constantly. According to Friedman: "Mishkin had a deal with Bilgrey for the World Theatre that nobody else could get.1130

The World Theatre (by then dubbed the "New Mature World Theatre") become "worldfamous" in 1972 as the venue that introduced the breakthrough hard-core film Deep Throat to New York, and soon the world." An August 1972 police raid on the theatre only added to the World's notoriety, and business increased exponentially." Running thereafter strictly as a porno house (the World was now proudly calling itself "The Nation's Flagship Adult Theatre"),33 in 1982 the World was taken over by the Embassy Theatre chain, who quickly turned it into a family-friendly venue, in step with the rehabilitation of Times Square going on at the time. The Embassy Theatre ran until 1987, when it was turned into office space.34 With its celebrated Old English architecture and august, if checkered career, it seems a shame that the World Theatre was not preserved, as it may have represented the preeminent historical landmark of the Times Square grindhouse phenomenon.

In 1972, hard-core pornography brazenly leaped from the underground mob ghetto onto mainstream movie screens, changing forever the cultural landscape, and accelerating the already-rapid decline of urban entertainment centers, Times Square foremost. Many exploitation distributors such as K. Gordon Murray and David Friedman called it quits at that point, having neither the resources or the stomach to take that final leap into cultural degradation by having what was always deliciously hinted at, but never shown, revealed in all its pock-marked, syphilitic glory. Others, such as Radley Metzger, accepted the challenge of graphic on-screen sex and attempted, against all odds, to turn it into something of an art form. The "art porno" movement, short-lived and doomed from the start, was nonetheless a fascinating moment in time with great potential, a cinema subgenre which deserves loving analysis by some intrepid author. The Mishkins, never shy in adapting to new trends in the marketplace, decided to try the XXX marketplace and see where it took them. There appear to have been at least four Mishkin releases which received a rating of "X" or higher: The Filthiest Show in Town (1973), Intimate Teenager (1975), My Erotic Fantasies (1976), Penetration (1976), and Coming Together (1979). My Erotic Fantasies, directed by a young Jim McBride, one of few Mishkin alumni who would successfully journey to the big leagues in Hollywood, was possibly the first Mishkin release which boasted three different versions: one, an R-rated version for suburban drive-ins; a soft-X-rated version for urban grindhouses, and a XXX-rated version for the porno houses.35 Using skills honed on early European imports and several of the Milligan films, Mishkin commissioned insert shots in various degrees of graphic depiction for the different versions.

Filthiest Show in Town (1973) is a most odd duck in the Mishkin canon. Although Ernie Pintoff's Dynamite Chicken (1971) predates it, it is one of the earliest examples of the "omnibus" or "pastiche" film, wherein short comedic sketches with a loosely-based theme are surrounded by a framing device which (theoretically) ties them all together. A common thread of all films in this subgenre, which includes such subsequent mainstream hits as The Groove Tube (1974, d: Ken Shapiro), Tunnelvision (1976, d: Neal Israel, Brad Swirnoff), The Kentucky Fried Movie (1977, d: John Landis), is satirical takes on television programming, with commercials and game

shows being the most popular targets. The basic premise in Filthiest Show in Town is that a risque television network, "National Genital Television," is raided and brought to trial on obscenity charges, a coy reference to the treacherous world of the sexploitation film exhibitor and the dirty bookstore owner, who were ever in danger of being similarly "busted."

The subsequent court trial is used as the framing device in which examples of NGT's programming are viewed, as evidence. (In an amusing touch, National Genital Television is owned by an old-world Jew and an Italian mobster, a sly reference to the principal ethnicity of the power players in the New York "adult entertainment" industry.) The main portion of the film centers around the unspooling of The Maiden Game, a broad parody of Chuck Barris' landmark game show The Dating Game. The main conceit in the new program is that all the contestants are naked, a nod to the new liberalism in cinema at the time, and likely the reason the film received an X rating upon initial release. The film is awash in full frontal nudity which, although appearing ill-advised today, was certainly the rage at the time. The Maiden Game runs along the same lines as its mentor, with the guest asking questions of three members of the opposite sex. The painfully corny sex puns are occasionally interspersed with incongruous stock footage of young girls screaming in a studio audience. One of the early guests is a Nazi war criminal, responsible for killing "14 million penguins." Two other contestants are porno superstars Harry Reems and Tina Russell (arguably, two of the homeliest people to ever grace a movie screen).

In contrast to the woefully uninspired game show parody, the most memorable set pieces in this film, as in the other pastiche television parody films, are the "commercials," which coyly try to capture the worst excesses of American advertising molded to their particular agenda. In this case, the products being hawked are all sexually-related, often woefully so, such as a double-headed dildo and a love potion. Two of the commercial parodies, however, are tangential and a touch perverse; in one, a small girl runs into her parents' bedroom and screams ecstatically to her naked guardians, "The dentist said I have 20% less hair in my teeth with Reem!," the implication being that the prepubescent girl regularly performs oral sex on one or more partners, quite possibly her parents, and cleans her mouth out afterwards

with this sexually-oriented toothpaste. Even more absurd is a commercial wherein "The Man from Feces" shows cityfolk how they can continue on their busy way after stepping in large piles of dog poop, basically by wrapping their shoes in plastic bags. What makes this commercial downright surreal is the fact that it was conspicuously (and inexplicably) shot in front of the United Nations building -could this have been a sly comment on the part of the filmmakers as to the chronic inefficacy of that well-meaning but under-achieving organization? Regardless of likely intent, the "Man From Feces" commercial is the stand-out moment in the film, and bonafide cultural time-capsule material.

Interspersed with the television programming, the courtroom trial ruminates fitfully on definitions of obscenity and free speech issues, as proselytized by an assortment of crudely-drawn stereotypes (the lunatic Freudian doctor, the obsessive government agent, the prudish sex addict, etc.) The most provocative testimony is given by a Catholic archbishop, who states that he is not in the least disturbed by the prurient content of the NGT programming-he can only be sexually aroused by "torture, mutilation, and violence!" When the jury at long last reaches their verdict, they unanimously agree that National Genital Television should continue to broadcast unfettered; as their spokesman gleefully states: "We want to see it again!" The film thus aligns itself definitively with the sentiment not only of the makers of pornography, but with the genre's audience, who certainly want to believe that some harmless on-screen sexual shenanigans hurt no one.

As with many other Mishkin releases, Filthiest Show in Town proudly takes place in Manhattan; the film begins with an aerial shot of the city, and later on features an interesting montage of Times Square at night, including grindhouse marquees for adult fare such as Split Beaver and Sidewalk Cowboy. Filthiest Show in Town was made by Rick and Bob Endelson, who would soon go on to make the astounding Fight for Your Life (1977) for Mishkin. This earlier effort appears to have been picked up for distribution by Mishkin, who may or may not have had anything to do with its production.

Intimate Teenager appears to be the German R-rated sex film Schlusselloch-Report (1973, aka "Keyhole Report"), with inserted U.S. sex scenes. Likewise, My Erotic Fantasies was 1974's R-rated sex comedy Hot Times with additional sex scenes (conceivably even the same sex scenes used in Intimate Teenager). Yet the oddest Mishkin-XXX duck by far has to be Penetration, in which Mishkin took an Italian "giallo" (lurid crime thriller) called Rivelazioni di un maniaco sessuale al capo delta squadra mobile (1972, aka "The Slasher Is the Sex Maniac") and added the obligatory U.S.-shot sex scenes. It seems likely that these XXX "hybrids" did not fare terribly well in the marketplace, with so much competition from films which, although also usually low-budget, at least had a consistent mise en scene, and invariably boasted more sex action than their clumsy Mishkin brethren. It also seems likely that organized crime interests, in the Times Square area at least, barred an independent maverick like Mishkin from joining the "boy's club" which ruled Times Square with an iron fist until its collapse in the early 1980s.

Mishkin's last four releases, 1977-1983, include a lackluster sex farce (Pelvis, 1977), a race-based thriller, Fight for Your Life (1977), A Matter of Love (1979), The Nesting (1981) and a kung-fu import (Bruce Is Loose, 1983). Of these, Fight for Your Life (1977) stands out as something of an exploitation legend. purportedly causing near-riots when shown in ethnocentric grindhouse situations.36 Mishkin's most successful overall production, Fight for Your Life is considered one of the great exploitation films of the era, and it holds up remarkably well today. Pitting three psychopathic killers against a god-fearing middle-class black family in a horrifying hostage situation would be in itself enough to enrage the average grindhouse audience, but Fight for Your Life takes this volatile situation to its furthest extremes. The racist agenda of the lead convict (William Sanderson in a role light-years away from his cliched portrayal of local yokel Larry on the Newhart TV series) is emphasized in a way most other films wouldn't dare - he calls his captives "niggers," "coons" and "jungle bunnies," makes them sing and dance, etc.

Yet Fight for Your Life revels in even more excesses, such as tossing a sexually-assaulted woman off a cliff to her death, pretending to shoot a

toddler in the face, and most egregiously, the stoning to death of a young boy. In comparison, the standard-issue violence in the film (gang rape, pistol-whipping, etc.) seems positively quaint. Yet despite its sleazy premise, Fight for Your Life is a competent thriller, thanks to a strong screenplay by Straw Weisman, exemplary photography by Lloyd Freidus, and tight direction by Bob Endelson. The film stands far above other titles in the exploitation canon, and most conspicuously, far above any other Mishkin production. As illustrated vividly by the Andy Milligan films, Mishkin liked to spend not one penny more than necessary to get something on screen. In comparison to a Milligan feature, Fight for Your Life looks like a Hollywood blockbuster.37 Mishkin's touch can be seen, if not in the budget, in the opening credits, wherein a police van containing the film's villains plows through New York City streets, including Times Square. The credits end over a beautiful aerial shot of the Manhattan skyline, and the sequence in toto could only prove nostalgic to the Gotham grindhouse audience. A most curious later scene, when the convicts attempt to lynch one of the black women, is shot in hand-held cinema verite style, and brings to mind the grungy verite epics of Andy Milligan. There can be no doubt that Mishkin was proud of this, his next-to-last production; after the film's triumphant first run, it went on to lucrative re-release under several different titles in severely edited versions.38

On the other side of the spectrum is the 1979 release, A Matter of Love, arguably the worst film Mishkin ever released, including the worst of the Andy Milligan projects. Filmed by pornography director Chuck Vincent, the tedious, predictable storyline concerns two sleazy couples who accidentally end up sharing the same shoreline cottage on the same fateful weekend, and end up "swinging" with each other, an event which precipitates one of the women's long-sought emancipation from a cruel, emotionally negligent husband. A Matter of Love has (relatively) high production values and an original music score, as did Fight for Your Life, but shares none of the predecessor's intelligence, wit or entertainment value. It is little better than the average porno film, either in its original "R"-rated version, or later, with hard-core sex scenes added, released as Coming Together. Mishkin's son Lew was heavily involved in this film, as the production lists his Jaylo International company, and this may partially explain why the film is all

style and no content - apparently the junior Mishkin was in love with all things glitzy and empty, especially as it concerned movie production.39

The Nesting (1981) is an interesting anomaly in the Mishkin canon, in that it is a relatively slick, up-scale production which managed release in some mainstream situations, suggesting that if given enough time, Mishkin and Co. might have broken out of the grindhouse/drive-in ghetto in which they had been heretofore confined. Filmed in upstate New York by Armand Weston, a former porno-film director who had made two of the best hardcore sex-narratives of the period (Defiance!) 1975 and The Taking of Christina, 1976), The Nesting is essentially a low-budget riff on Stanley Kubrick's The Shining (1980); both films center around a neurotic author who escapes the big city for a rural vacation, ending up at a haunted hotel inhabited by poltergeists who trigger the protagonists' latent dementia. Although at heart a pedestrian affair, with little in the way of character development, the production and cinematography in The Nesting are lush, and there are some impressive set pieces; overall The Nesting manages to sustain an air of dread unusual in films of this caliber. Apparently, Mishkin had nothing to do with the production of The Nesting, merely leasing it from its producers upon completion.

During this latter period, Lewis Mishkin continued to take more responsibility in the family business, leaving William more time to tend to Elaine. Lewis' film releases during this time period included Porky's-style sex comedies like Hot Times (1974), and the racist thriller, Fight for Your Life (1977). Yet it seemed like Lewis' mind was more focused on revenge and maintaining an image than in actually running a business. In a 1981 Fangoria magazine interview with Andy Milligan by Sleazoid Express legend Bill Landis, Milligan referred to Lewis as "Bill Mishkin's idiot son," and Lewis proceeded to threaten the magazine with lawsuits, devoting time to petty vendettas that could have been better spent on maintaining his father's legacy. The obsessiveness with which Lewis pursued this frivolous matter suggests that the remark hit close to home.4o

Elaine Mishkin finally succumbed to her illness in 1996, and her husband died the next year. Lewis' first act after his father's death was to destroy

many artifacts of the family business, including promotional material and film prints, and apparently everything he could locate that had anything to do with Andy Milligan. To inquiries later on, Lewis would sputter that the Milligan films were garbage and had no further market value, but this transparent lie is easily countered by the fact that Lewis produced two films (Carnage and Monstrosity) with Andy Milligan in the 1980s expressly for the home video market, so the junior Mishkin knew well the value of films marketed to home video. No, this destructive, even psychotic act of familial vandalism was an act of sheer vengeance, anger towards the father certainly and a curious antipathy towards the filmmaker who had done so much to legitimize Mishkin Senior in the marketplace as not only a distributor but a producer. In addition, Lewis Mishkin could not have been unaware that it was the proceeds from his father's business, the Milligan films foremost, which amassed the fortune needed to put Lewis through law school. Lewis Mishkin died of a brain tumor a mere three years after his father, a most lyrical ending to a wretched man eaten alive by hatred, bitterness and self-loathing.

Thankfully, much of William Mishkin's legacy escaped the demented claws of Mishkin Junior, and movie fans today have at least some of Mishkin's work in perpetuity. Like other great movie showmen such as Kroger Babb, Dwain Esper, David Friedman and K. Gordon Murray, William Mishkin had a tremendous impact on the movie industry and popular culture, giving the major studios a run for their money with his plucky, sensational populist fare. As an ongoing patron to struggling filmmaker Andy Milligan, Mishkin deserves respect and praise from all who love cinema. As one of the most successful exploitation film distributors of the 20th century, Mishkin deserves a chapter in cinema history books. Combining the mischievous spirit of the carnival huckster with a poet's skill and uncanny business savvy, William Mishkin turned the lowly position of grindhouse film broker into an art form, becoming in the process a showman for all times.

7

Sexploitation Revolution

The so-called "Sexual Revolution" which dominated the 1960s did not erupt full-blown out of nowhere, being an momentous expansion of forces germinated a century earlier. In the late 19th century, several groups began to challenge the repressive mores of the Victorian era, which placed great value on female chastity and the suppression of erotic longing. Two such groups, the Utopianists and the Free Lovers, instead espoused the virtues of sex education, birth control, and casual sexual experimentation outside marriage, in loosely-knit congregations which today appear shockingly similar to the archetypal 1960s "hippie commune." Early into the 20th century, further inroads against sexual Victorianism were made, with noble figures such as Margaret Sanger and Elizabeth Cady Stanton proselytizing on the merits of women's rights in matters of reproduction, a crusade with far-reaching implications regarding a woman's rights to fashion her sexual life unfettered by constrictive (largely male) dictates.' By the 1920s, much of this new philosophy had entered the mainstream of society, and this decade of relative sexual freedom, known colloquially as "The Roaring Twenties," is considered by some the first sexual revolution in America.

Following World War II, many forces conspired to undermine a concerted attempt to reestablish a faux-Victorian sexual repression, in the United States especially. The first of these was the publication of two books by Alfred Kinsey, chronicling sexual behavior in the male and the female (released in 1948 and 1953, respectively). Fiercely challenged at the time of release, and demonized by reactionary forces of societal repression even today, Kinsey's flawed but fascinating research opened a floodgate of discussion and experimentation which had repercussions throughout and beyond the 1960s.3 Kinsey's works revealed the prevalence, even among "respectable" middle-class citizens, of heretofore undiscussed (and thus largely denied) activities such as masturbation, marital infidelity, homosexuality, and various sundry sexual "perversions." By dragging these supposed "aberrations" into the light of day, and revealing them to be far more common than formerly admitted, many people, especially those on the

fringes of "normal" society, were now able to feel partially accepted; at least, the notion of the adulterer or the homosexual as being a loathsome freak of nature and enemy of society was largely dispelled. Also in 1953, publisher Hugh Hefner started his groundbreaking magazine, Playboy, which featured risque nude photography of beautiful young women, bringing the formerly ghettoized industry of male masturbatory aid into mainstream society and turning sex, for all intents and purposes, into just another consumer product. 1953 might thus be called, if not the unofficial start of the prototypical sexual revolution, assuredly the beginning of a "Jerkoff Revolution."

The 1960s started off with a "bang," as the first effective birth control pill was approved for use in the United States in June of that year.' The contraceptive, branded Enovid by its producer, Searle Laboratories, was released after almost a decade of experimental trials, primarily on poverty-stricken women in Puerto Rico.' Enovid became widely available circa 1963, and is credited with ending the post-World War II Baby Boom in 1964, as well as igniting both the feminist and pro-choice movements-by 1970, ten million women were on "The Pill."6 For women, the availability of easy and largely effective contraceptive techniques had immediate advantages, not the least of which was freedom from unwanted pregnancy, the ability to more liberally fashion one's sexual activity, and emancipation from woman's historical role as incubator of men's babies. For the male, the emergence of the pill was a double-edged sword. Surely, it greatly increased the potential for casual sexual encounters with willing women. Yet this power which women now took over their own sexuality, and most specifically their reproductive role, also triggered deep male fears of barrenness, impotence, and a loss of control over the sexual realm of culture, a realm in which males historically had always been in the power position. To some observers, the pill had a more ominous function, as it augured the death of the family, and perhaps even summoned the end of the human race.7 Along with the pill, the increasing acceptance of abortion as a lifestyle option also had significant repercussions for both sexes, allowing women even greater control over the destiny of their lives and bodies, and adding another area of decreasing power (and potential extinction) to patriarchal institutions, eliciting fierce debate on both sides, a debate which rages to this day.'

Yet other, even more powerful sociological forces were brewing as the 1960s began its tumultuous journey towards history. The stifling social conformity of the postwar years had a deleterious effect on women foremost, who in the United States at least, had been largely reduced to mere breeders and servants to a phallo-centric culture of vastly-expanding technology. The rapid expansion of industry and commerce in the 1950s, with the ominous growth of the military-industrial complex a most conspicuous emblem, had relegated womankind to the lowly role of maid (housewife) and babysitter (mother), with a very few notable exceptions, and the endemic occurrence of alcoholism, prescription drug abuse, mental collapse and suicide among women during this time attests to something seriously askew in the felicity of these citizens.' In 1963, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique was published, and gave proud voice to the largely unarticulated longing of women to achieve something more in their lives, to in fact address those things which were most valued, that being the freedom to choose their own life path, and a desire to contribute to society with something other than their body, their muscles, and their vagina. Friedan had noted with some amusement that articles and fiction published in magazines aimed at women almost invariably painted the female as an emotional creature of limited intellectual capacity, and happiest when serving males or their offspring. Rarely was a woman in these publications portrayed as having a viable career outside the home, especially in an area of traditionally male dominance (i.e.) science, business, industry, finance), and even in the rare case of the "career woman," the protagonist happily decided to give up her work so that she could return to her "sacred" role - serving males and their offspring. In Friedan's astute assessment, the cultural portrayal of women in the 1950s was little more than heavy-handed propaganda, an attempt to brainwash the gender into believing that they were born to be nothing more than wives and mommies. Friedan challenged this spurious thesis, and cited historical precedent in the form of reformist women of the early 20th century, who had championed for equal rights for women at a time when the notion, to society, was all but treasonous.10

Friedan's treatise struck a nerve in womankind, as did other "radical" tracts of the time, which dared to redress the role of woman in modern society. One of the most conspicuous was Helen Gurley Brown's Sex and the

Single Girl, which blatantly spurned marriage as an institution and proposed instead that women consciously (and conspicuously) treat men as mere sexual objects, just as men had treated women since time immemorial." Simultaneously, social reformers such as Alma Birk championed efforts to encourage married women to consider returning to work.' Soon, a viable movement towards female selfawareness was afoot, a revolutionary moment in time punctuated in 1966 as Friedan and others founded the National Organization for Women, an act which initiated the modern feminist movement.13

As with any nascent social movement, differing philosophies dictated varying levels of engagement to the cause. Some women seemed happy merely to add freedom of choice in sexual affairs and employment opportunity to their catalog of permitted civil rights, and this relatively conformist feminist collective became the media-friendly "woman's liberation" movement, happy to burn bras and march in the streets while otherwise carrying on business pretty much as usual. Meanwhile, others embraced the notion of gender prejudice wholeheartedly, seeing clearly the entirely oppressive role which male-dominated society had taken in diminishing women's vast potential to one of slave (sexual, economic and emotional) to self-serving and punitive patriarchal interests. This branch of feminism, dubbed "radical feminism," sought to abolish male control over women's lives, and largely advocated a segregationist approach towards culture, in which women would take care of women, and men could fend for themselves. In this, early radical feminist doctrine overlapped somewhat with the militant, segregationist lesbian agenda. Soon, radical groups such as Redstocking, Weatherwomen, The Feminists and WITCH were courting members, printing manifestos, and organizing an all-out assault on the world of men.14

Two areas in which radical feminism diverged from their more timid sisters were reproductive rights, and the exploitation of the female body for commerce. In the first, even supposedly "liberating" advancements such as the Pill and the diaphragm were seen not as boons to womankind, but as cruel, diabolical extensions of a techno-phallic society's continued assault on women's bodies, which after all were allowed to exist in order to sexually

serve men. As feminist author Linda Grant articulates the radical feminist position, "reproductive technology was demonized as a torture chamber for men to act out their misogynist fantasies on women."" Although new birth control and reproductive technologies enabled women to control their sexual destiny as never before, its ultimate purpose to the radical feminist was nothing more than an increase in volume of noncommittal sex available to males.

Overlapping considerably, but addressed as a separate issue, was the time-honored notion on the part of male-dominated society of objectifying the female body, which was used as a cheap lure for advertising and commerce, as well as setting up an impossible standard of male-dictated female beauty. In this way, many feminists argued that the male obsession with female beauty amounted to little more than an extension of the practice of men choosing the best dairy cow or race horse from a group, based on proscribed attributes such as age, health and aesthetics. The most egregious example of this "livestock" approach to female beauty is the tradition of the "beauty contest," in which groups of "pretty girls" compete fiercely to be chosen the "best" specimen of male-approved femininity by a panel of (traditionally albeit not exclusively male) judges. In addition to "the perfect figure" (i.e., skinny, with large breasts), the aspiring pageant winner must have a winning smile, some marginal talent in the performing arts, and most essentially, a non-confrontational, otherdirected nature, dedicated to "helping others" or otherwise serving entrenched patriarchy. In sum, the perfect woman according to these guidelines is a submissive flunky with sex appeal to her boss. It is no wonder that radical feminism took great umbrage to this woefully misogynist tradition, expressing their displeasure in various events, the most notorious being the largely successful disruption of the 1968 Miss America pageant, a protest covered at length in the major media, and having a significant cultural impact, even if for but a moment.16

Radical feminism, with its contrary and abolitionist doctrines and problematic positions on sex, never really had a chance to flourish in entrenched patriarchy. A concerted effort to marginalize and silence the movement from male-dominated cultural interests, as well as disruptive dissent from within its own ranks, led to its relative obscurity by the mid-

1970s. What was allowed to survive, and to some degree flourish, was the safer "woman's liberation" movement, which seemed satisfied with cosmetically restructuring women's role as a guiltless and aggressive sexual creature in male society. Women such as Betty Dodson were daring trailblazers in progressive sexual experimentation, including the stridently non-monogamous movement quaintly dubbed polyfidelity.17

Following in the wake of Helen Gurley Brown, popular new tomes emerged which redefined woman's sexuality, without addressing anything political or potentially confrontational. Bestsellers such as The Sensuous Woman by "J" (aka Terry Garrity), and Erica Jong's Fear of Flying, championed the sexually daring "new woman" as a potent symbol of female emancipation." Taking women's sexual freedom as their mission statement, magazines such as Nova, Cosmopolitan, and Ms. prospered as culturally acceptable dilutions of early feminist principle." By the mid-1970s, when patriarchal sexual oppression had resurfaced with a vengeance via the proliferation of mainstream hard-core pornography, the early feminist voice which decried sex as a misogynist political tool was all but drowned, and those who later were forced to redefine the sexual revolution as a largely male construct, to which women were willing dupes, had come to this realization too late to change their world.20

Setting the potential for revolutionary gender-centric politics aside, the sexual revolution was at root a concerted effort on the part of men and women to challenge, dismantle and revise obsolete and arbitrary rules, castes and guidelines towards appropriate sexual behavior among consenting adults. This mass social movement was alternately dubbed "sexual liberation" or the "sexual freedom movement," and there were almost as many areas of discussion and experimentation (as well as points of contention) as their were participants. Certainly, the rigid and debilitating sex roles of the past were in dire need of redress, and many notions of the new sexual thought were constructive and creative modifications of existing behaviors which had proven themselves outdated. The first of these was the increasingly untenable canard of sex being appropriate only between two partners wed in marriage, marriage itself being closely scrutinized as a problematic, possibly even harmful social ritual. Thus, the youth of the

1960s (and subsequently many of their elders) took a concerted stance against traditional heterosexual marriage, substituting such (then-daring) experiments as casual non-marital relationships, sex involving more than one partner simultaneously (group sex), and the carrying on of sexual affairs with more than one partner (polyfidelity). Additionally, as both a mocking of and sincere revision to traditional marriage, groups of young people would gather together in several couplings and engage in socially-sanctioned matrimony as a unit (group marriage).

For many young persons, this experimentation with unconventional intimacy did boast a vaguely political aim, as it symbolized a generic rejection of the establishment, and the moral values of their elders. It was, in retrospect, a heady and seductive time, for in the period roughly bookended between 1960 and 1980, there occurred a window of social opportunity without parallel in history, a brief moment when sexual activity was largely liberated from the specters of unwanted pregnancy and unchecked disease.' Yet behind it all was a certain naivete, as freely available sex for all citizens was seen as a panacea to all the world's ills. This sexual idealism, while noble in theory, could not possibly address many of the complex socio-political issues of the day, and this simplistic, neo-Freudian approach towards a perceived sexual utopia proved its own undoing. It was not long before this supposedly emancipating philosophy revealed its inevitable darker side, as during this time period of rampant sexual experimentation, and ironically as part of the general stated aim of "woman's liberation," females were expected to be readily available for all sorts of casual sexual activities, with nary a thought as to emotional involvement or potential health or mental consequences." After all the chanting and protesting, in the end women were being exploited by men just as before, in fact perhaps in ways (and numbers) not before imagined.

As for the homosexual community, this maligned and persecuted collection of sexual outsiders began to form, for the first time in modern history, some semblance of solidarity in the immediate years following World War II. Some observers maintain that the awesome world conflict brought together significant numbers of homosexuals, who then were able to form tentative alliances, often for the first time, with their fellow travelers.

Postwar, many homosexuals migrated to major U.S. cities, New York and San Francisco foremost, due to the increased chances of camaraderie and the relative anonymity offered in large urban population centers.23 By the early 1950s, small "homophile" movements such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, began to sprout up.24 It is interesting to note that what was eventually tagged "gay liberation" took two distinct directions in those early days. One promoted a radical isolationist philosophy which advocated rejection of the mainstream society which had demonized sexual difference for so long. The other promoted an integrative approach towards "normal" society, and it was this more conformist movement which eventually won out.25 At the same time, Kinsey's published research on sexual behavior among males and females went far in dispelling many negative connotations about homosexuality, and as the 1950s wore on, homosexual men and women saw themselves as, if not accepted into mainstream society, less and less pilloried for their lifestyles?

Yet it was not until the 1960s when the "explosion" of liberation for both male and female homosexuals was really ignited. Two landmark events illustrate the accumulating confidence of the homosexual community as it confronted the entrenched prejudice still evident in "normal" society. In the first, a radical lesbian collective called Daughters of Bilitis held a fancy costume ball in San Francisco on New Year's Day, 1965. Police were tipped off, and they raided the event, arresting many men and women. With the timely involvement of the American Civil Liberties Union, all charges against the innocent partygoers were dismissed, and the event is considered the first time that a homosexual conclave successfully stood up against the forces of repressive law.' The bellwether event of the homosexual community's "coming out" was the infamous "Stonewall Inn" incident, wherein during a police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar, patrons resisted police action and rioted in the streets, standing up for themselves as a socio-political force for the first time. This historic event is universally considered the birth of the "gay power" movement, which soon morphed into the less confrontational "gay rights" movement." The subsequent legalization of homosexual activity enabled the gay community to make further fortuitous inroads into areas of society which had been formerly denied them.29

For many, the cultural wave towards sexual experimentation overlapped with increased scrutiny of other troubling social issues of the day, such as racial prejudice, the ongoing war in Vietnam, the brutal individual and corporate competition seen in advanced capitalism, etc. The college-aged generation of the mid-1960s, especially, seemed painfully aware of such social and economic injustices, and many gathered in solidarity towards reevaluating, revising and in many cases rejecting, the cultural norms of the day. The most emblematic gathering of this politically conscious youth movement was the subset dubbed "the hippies." Labeled in homage to the jazz music term "hep," and owing a nod of thanks to their immediate anti-establishment predecessors, the "Beatniks," the hippie movement surfaced circa 1964, with the largest original enclaves consolidating in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco, the East Village of New York City, as well as London, Toronto and Paris.

Most conspicuous to the establishment outsider were the hippies' grooming and attire, as long hair and outrageous clothing were the standard, with the costuming (and to some degree pacifist philosophy) of the Native American and the Eastern Mystic definite influences on hippie culture. Equally as disturbing to the "square" world was the hippie propensity to gather together in informal living arrangements known as communes, which to establishment types reeked of communism and potential anarchy. The prototypical hippie "commune" contained between 12 and 25 members, ranging in age from 17 to 25.3° As a fascinating, if flawed, experiment in socialist living, the hippie communes attempted to share everything equally, including occasional earned income, food, clothing, drugs and sex partners. In this way, they to some degree mirrored that sacred social institution which so many hippies were running away from: the family. Yet exactly as in the modern (biological) family, the success of the communal unit depended upon the dedication of each individual to its survival, as well as the group's ability to work together towards common goals, a project which may not have sufficiently stroked each individual member's ego. In short, the hippie commune found that the maintenance of a social unit was difficult and complex, its problems exacerbated by the hippies' aversion to many helpful aspects of the society they were theoretically rejecting.

In general, the hippies were against everything in the "square" world, which included such confining social doctrines as runaway free market enterprise, life-long wage labor towards meaningless acquisition, monogamous marriage, a militaristic government engaged in imperialistic conquest of weaker nations, and other assorted societal ills, all of which were encapsulated derisively by the youth movement as "the ant trip." One area in which hippies evinced a visceral dislike was the increasingly technological nature of modern society, which held the threat of turning people into anonymous ciphers of an industrial "Moloch," flesh-and-blood counterparts of computer keypunch cards (witness the popular hippie slogan: "I am a human being: Do not fold) spindle or mutilate").

Yet at its best, the hippie movement orchestrated a number of iconic consciousnessraising media events, in order to increase awareness of a perceived social injustice or cultural crime - one of the most memorable of these was the assault on the New York Stock Exchange in August 1967, wherein a gathering of hippies infiltrated the visitor's center, and showered the "greedy capitalists" below with a cascade of torn and crumpled dollar bills. After being dragged out to the street by security guards, the group continued their protest against runaway capitalism by burning currency and chanting, "This is the death of money!," in a mar velous combination of performance piece and guerrilla attack (or to use hippie terminology, "monkey warfare").

In regards the sexual revolution, the hippies often stood for, yet in some cases stood starkly against, most of the "revolution's" most fiercely debated tenants. In league with the sexual idealist, hippie philosophy dictated that a world founded on some perceived, illdefined "sexual freedom" held the potential to transform many of the most oppressive evils of the current world situation. As mentioned earlier, the hippie movement readily embraced many activities of "the new sex," including group sex, polyfidelity and group marriage. Groups such as the Sexual Freedom League combined hippie idealism with that of the old-school libertine to advance an ostensibly radical, yet eerily familiar agenda of sexual obsession." As with the drug-taking aspect of the movement, hippie sexual freedom rubbed shoulders uneasily with darker aspects of capitalist enterprise, and many male and

female "Free Lovers" eventually found themselves willing (or not) participants in the burgeoning pornography industry, especially in areas such as San Francisco and New York.32 Chained somehow to the notion of sex as being a beautiful thing, to be shared as often and with as many participants as possible, hippie sexual idealism shortly began to look indistinguishable from oldworld sexual licentiousness, and willing sex performers, jobless and hungry and frequently addicted to expensive drugs, found themselves easy marks for the criminal elements of the sex industry, who in the end exploited them as harshly as any other capitalist enterprise.

Perhaps that was the point of the hippies' failure to effectively change society, that idealism and theoretical agenda face swift extinction when confronted with the cruel realities of life, both collective and individual. For every hippie who was a clear-thinking, foresighted idealist were several more who were really nothing more than dropouts, societal failures and disturbed neurotics, and who used the movement to hide from the forbidding specter of adult responsibility. Added to this was the devastating impact of the unchecked use of drugs. The potential for mental and spiritual emancipation which drugs offered to the strictly self-disciplined individual was inevitably crushed under the weight of reckless and indiscriminate overuse, and the eventuality of debilitating addiction to the potent substances.

Yet although the first hippies were doomed first by their inability to control their Faustian relationship with seductive mind-altering chemicals, there were equally portentous signs of destruction gestating from without as well. Urban communities reacted primarily with hostility to encroachment by these perceived junkies, misfits and freeloaders into their neighborhoods, an enmity which triggered acts of vandalism, theft, assault and murder. In addition, organized crime quickly moved in on the scene, lured by the rampant drug traffic commencing in hippie communities. In short, the prototypical hippie movement was doomed from the start by attack from debilitating forces within and without, and the original movement was officially declared "dead" by its own members in late 1967, a mere two years after its inauguration, an event celebrated by a symbolic "funeral" in Haight-Ashbury. Some hippies changed their label to "Free Men," and the remnants

of the movement emigrated from urban to rural centers, where agrarian-based communes continued to flourish, some in fact prospering well into the 1980s.

Although woman's libbers, gay activists, and anarcho-pacifist hippies tried valiantly to rescue sexuality from the lewd grasp of male-dominated culture, their often-Herculean efforts ultimately proved marginal against an omnipotent, entrenched patriarchy which claimed utter, non-negotiable hegemony over all aspects of the heterosexual social contract, from the family to the political arena to the marketplace. As defined after the fact, the sexual revolution was labeled an essentially male experiment in which most, if not all seemingly progressive or confrontational aspects of sexual revisionism were effectively detoured back to serve the sacred tenant of patrist dogma: the compulsory satisfaction of male sexual desire. Thus was observed the curious convergence of the feminist movement with male expectations of casual sexual liaison from women, the co-opting of the "sexual freedom" movement into a source of cheap talent for the insatiable pornography industry, and the degeneration of the essentially political notion of polyfidelity into the woeful clutches of "swingers." As Linda Grant notes, "Much of the male sexual revolution was only libertinage by another name, and rightly it degenerated into the seediness of swinging and the disintegration of group marriages."33 It would appear that in the end, capitalism won the Sexual Revolution, commandeering the potentially revolutionary energy of that moment as fuel for the hungry fires of the sex industry.

And the sex industry is where the Sexual Revolution received its most conspicuous (if back-handed) acknowledgment, for this industry owed such a great deal to the hard work of the sexual revolutionaries. For a time, sexual freedoms were challenged legally as essential civil liberties, and the battles won in this area were taken to heart by the pornographers, who rode the coattails of these decisions for greater permissiveness (in both content and distribution) in the marketing of sex.34 For better or worse, the Sexual Revolution is given credit for dragging the pornographic marketplace out of the back-alley shadows and into the mainstream of culture, and by the end of the actual "revolution," in the early 1970s, the thriving sex industry was said

to be earning roughly $4 billion per annum.35 The sex industry was able to cleverly convert even the most extremist theories of the revolution for use in the male sexual marketplace, the evidence of this soon visible in the ascending harshness of sexploitation film product, and the increasingly graphic and violent nature of the ubiquitous "girly magazine." Even the egalitarian, peace-loving edicts of hippie sexual idealism, fleetingly captured in fringe newspapers such as San Francisco's Ball, soon degenerated into the crude, cynical, hopelessly misogynist sex tabloid industry, with Al Goldstein's Screw magazine perhaps the prime example of loathsome, woman-hating sex rags.36

As for the world of cinema, Hollywood was quick to pick up on the box-office potential of this vogue, with a series of alternately insightful and befuddled releases inspired by the new sexual freedom, including major studio hits such as The Happening (1967, d: Elliot Silverstein), Prudence and the Pill (1968, d: Fielder Cook, Ronald Neame), Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice (1969, d: Paul Mazursky), Easy Rider (1969, d: Dennis Hopper), Midnight Cowboy (1969, d: John Schlesinger), Myra Breckenridge (1970, d: Michael Sarne), and others. Yet it was the sexploitation film genre which really took the "Revolution" to heart, modifying its stories and content to (often vividly, and sometimes quite accurately) reflect what was going on in "the real world," albeit with the necessary prurient slant of focusing on sex for sex's sake. It is into this volatile, heavily conflicted yet fascinating environment that Andy Milligan created his first group of feature films, almost all of which fell into the sexploitation genre, cheaply-made features for the grindhouse and drive-in markets which placed an emphasis on daring and provocative sexual situations as their main narrative trope. As discussed in the chapters on Times Square and William Mishkin, the sexploitation film was a hardy genre which had graduated from the nudie and burlesque film in the immediate postwar era, to the rougher sex-and-violence formula of the mid-1960s. It is at this moment in time that Milligan leaped into the fray, crafting some amazing little melodramas which carried his own idiosyncratic sexual ideology within them, while effectively giving the audience (and distributor) what they paid for - lots of lurid, and often kinky sex.

From all existing information, the Milligan sexploitation films can all be safely declared "roughies," in that sex and violence were indiscriminately (and often fortuitously) mingled. Unfortunately, with the rare exceptions of Fleshpot on 42nd Street (1973) and Seeds of Sin (1968, which will be considered as primarily a horror film), all of Milligan's sexploitation films are considered lost at the time of this writing. Considering that this grouping of nine films comprises the entirety of Milligan's first, extremely prolific period of creativity, and likely containing some of his best work, this is a tragic loss to fans of the filmmaker and the genre in general. The reasons for the loss to posterity of the Milligan sexploitation films are manifold, and to some degree reflect a general peril of the grindhouse film marketplace. Sexploitation films were almost invariably made by shoestring producers and low-rent directors, and released by fringe, fly-by-night distributors. They were never considered "art" or any other such nonsense, and were not deemed of any particular value except during their original theatrical runs (and in some cases a furtive re-release under a different title). Due to their graphic nudity and licentious subject matter, virtually none of these films could ever be sold to television, and as the home video market was still decades away, there was no conceivable market for a cheap sexploitation film after it had made its sponsor a quick profit in a heavily-promoted, hastily-concocted grindhouse run.

What is rather shocking, and immensely gratifying to the film historian, is how many of these "throw-away" films nonetheless managed to survive destruction, and exist today in home video and DVD releases. Dedicated film archivists such as Mike Vraney of Something Weird Video and Greg Luce of Sinister Cinema have made something of a life quest in the locating, procuring and preserving of many of these lost grindhouse treasures, and as the sexploitation (and other throwaway film) genres are valuable cultural documents, it is extremely fortunate that at least a few folks understood their worth and spent the time, money and energy to save them from limbo. The preservation of such a fragile cultural genre as the sexploitation film is by definition an arbitrary quest, based as much on luck as anything else. As it turned out, some producers and distributors of grindhouse product saved prints of some, if not all of their film releases, and so these works were relatively easy to rescue when their owners were located -for instance,

producer/ directors such as David Friedman, Harry Novak, Herschell Gordon Lewis and Barry Mahon all managed to save at least a portion of their film catalog from the trash heap. Other abandoned grindhouse treasures, some legendary and quite valuable, were discovered at closed theaters and drive-ins, the back rooms of film exchanges, and in the "unpaid accounts" sections of film laboratories.

Yet still other grindhouse staples fared less well, one of the most tragic losses being that of the Milligan sexploitation film canon. As mentioned elsewhere, many of these films were consciously (and very likely with malice aforethought) destroyed by Lewis Mishkin, son of the films' original distributor, William Mishkin. What is most damning about "Junior's" act of cultural sabotage is not the destruction per se, as many distributors destroyed films in which they saw no further economic value. Mishkin Jr., however, knew that the Milligan sexploitation films retained potential value, as at the very time he committed this act of aggression, the neophyte home video marketplace was rapidly growing, and Mishkin himself had commissioned Milligan, and other filmmakers, to create films exclusively for this lucrative new market. Thus it seems inarguable that Mishkin Jr. was aware that the Milligan sexploitation films had potential value, and it cannot be ignored that he likely destroyed these beguiling grindhouse orphans simply because he disliked Milligan and his films, the act being one of petty personal vengeance. Mishkin Jr. is on record as openly despising Milligan, and seems to have been baffled during his entire lifetime as to why anyone would want to see an Andy Milligan film.37

Still, we can at least piece together some sort of general overview of the Milligan sexploitation canon, from promotional materials, personal anecdotes, and the occasional surviving review, and we will attempt to do so in the following short essays on each film. As we will see, many of the major tenants of the Sexual Revolution, and the "sexual freedom" movement in general, make an appearance in these films, including group sex, sadomasochistic relationships, reproductive freedoms, homosexuality, domestic violence, women's issues, etc.-one can only wonder what amazing things Milligan did with these ideas, filtered through his own inimitable worldview.

The Promiscuous Sex (1967)

Milligan's first sexploitation feature began life as Liz, and was self-produced by Milligan, either after or during production of his first film venture, the featurette Vapors. Likely emboldened by the relative critical success of Vapors, Milligan perhaps felt that he could break into the mainstream feature film marketplace with this tale of a young New York model who becomes deeply embroiled with the mob, and ends up a prostitute.38 The synopsis reflects a common, even cliche sexploitation trope, of the good-hearted girl who wants a better life for herself, only to be sabotaged by the debilitating forces which surround her, her own lust foremost. All sexual desire is harshly punished in the Milligan universe, and it would appear from the above synopsis that this was the case from the very start.

Like all of his subsequent sexploitation features, Liz was shot with the 16mm Auricon with which Milligan had previously shot Vapors, using the same primitive sound-recording techniques used in that film, the results likely quite similar in creating a quasi-documentary ambiance of faux-realism.39 Shot over several months on weekends, for $7,500, Milligan lined up several grindhouse film distributors to preview the rough cut of Liz at Theater of the Players in Manhattan. Only William Mishkin expressed interest, and only if Milligan agreed to add more nude scenes. Milligan originally declined the offer, but acquiesced when no other deals were forthcoming.40 According to John McCarty, Milligan added four inserts which "amounted to less than a few minutes of the leading lady running around topless in her dressing room."" Mishkin covered Milligan's lab bill, retitled the film The Promiscuous Sex, and premiered it at the World Theater on 49th Street (Mishkin's favorite outlet) where it ran for a record 29 weeks. The film was undoubtedly profitable for Mishkin, although he is on record as calling it only "moderately successful."42 Yet Milligan saw little if any profits from the film, and thus began one of the most overtly Faustian of business partnerships in the annals of independent film.43

A pressbook blurb for the film ("An Underground Treatment of a Fully Plotted Film! A Scathing Film of a Girl Without Morals!") signifies a

conscious effort on the part of Milligan (and probably Mishkin as well) to blur the line between art-house underground/experimental cinema, and the lurid grindhouse exploitation genre. Milligan himself recounted the film as one of his best: "It was a beautiful picture. Very artsy-fartsy, very French-cigarettes glowing in the dark."44 The grainy black and white 16mm photography apparently lent itself well to 35mm blow-up and, according to the filmmaker, the gritty cinema verite style of the film did not go unnoticed by critics. In fact, Milligan seemed well aware that what he was doing with The Promiscuous Sex and his subsequent sexploitation features, a style which might be described as "narrative verite," was very cutting-edge, as he mentions Warhol and Cassavettes as contemporaries in creating documentary-style realism via handheld (Write) camerawork in harness to raw, lurid melodramas.45

The Naked Witch (ca. 1967)

After the "moderate" box-office success of The Promiscuous Sex, William Mishkin fronted Andy Milligan $7,500-exactly the amount he had offered Milligan for Liz-to fashion another skid-row sexploitation feature, based on any scenario he desired. The result was The Naked Witch which, from all accounts, was a fabulous horror-sex romp worthy of European art cinema. Not to be confused with Larry Buchanan's proto-feminist The Naked Witch (1961), or a German import called variously Naked Witch or The Naked Wytche (circa 1969, an adult updating of "Hansel & Gretel"), Milligan's film was, like Liz, a grainy 16mm black and white verite hallucination, reportedly with some shocking and beautiful imagery. The film was shot in eight days in Manasquan, a popular tourist location on the New Jersey shore, famous for its expansive beaches and abundant fishing.46 Although Bill Landis dates the shoot "1964,"41 The Naked Witch was likely shot in early 1967, based on the fact that it was during the editing process that Milligan met the men who formed ASA Pictures, eventually making a deal to produce three films for them (The Degenerates, Depraved! and The Ghastly Ones) all of which were released in late 1967 or early 1968).

Like so many others of the early Milligan features, The Naked Witch appears to be a lost film. Thanks to Jimmy McDonough's biography of

Milligan, we at least have a fairly substantial synopsis for the film:

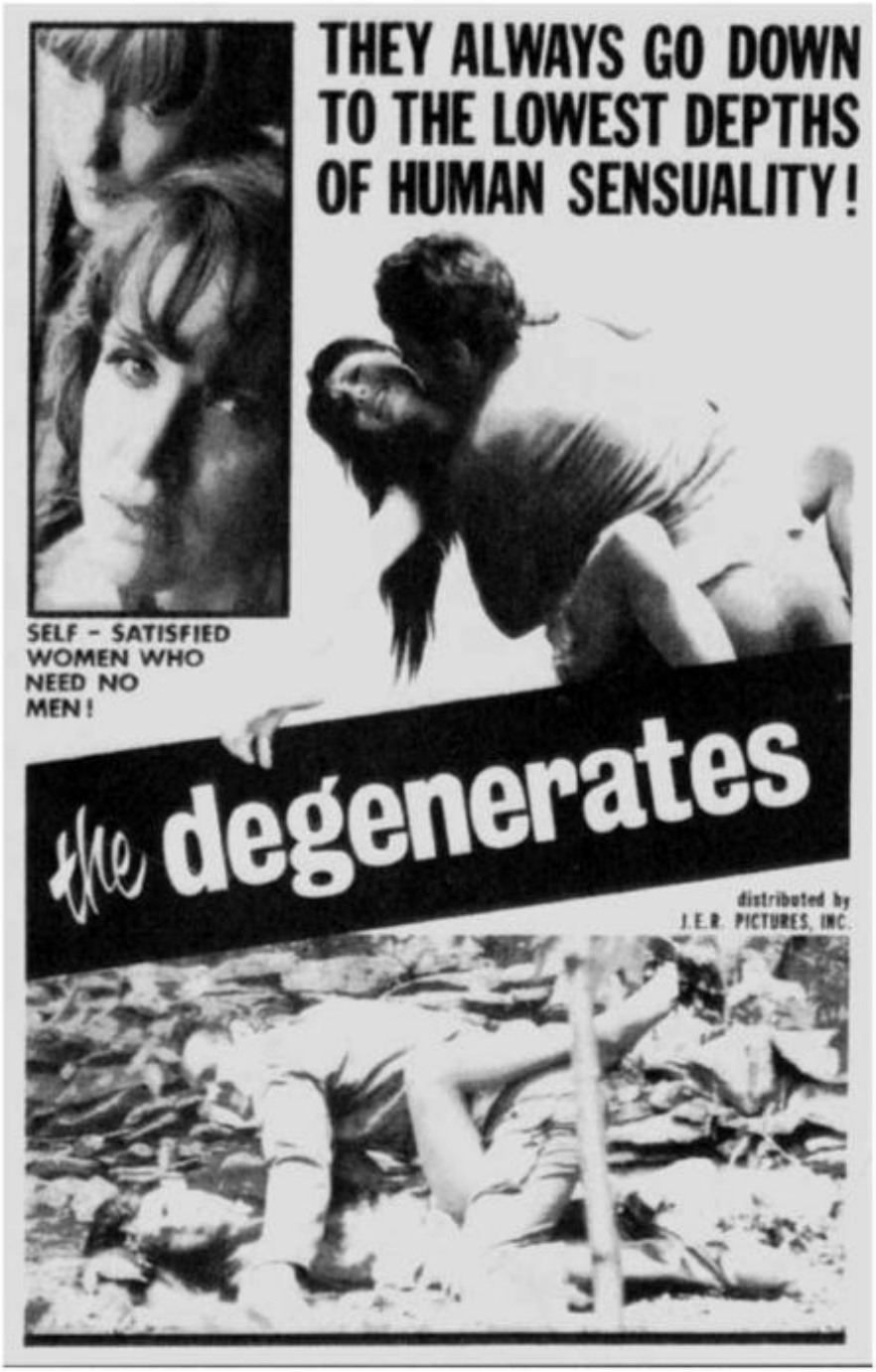
> It concerns the curse of a woman who was burned at the stake for partaking in orgies. Her daughter Beth - raised by Mary, the dead women's sister - is similarly scorned. Beth has an affair with Steve but they are afraid to tell anyone because of her background. She gets pregnant and, while Steven is at sea, gives birth to the stillborn baby at the house of the Dumb One, a hunchback ridiculed by the townspeople but befriended by Beth. Steven dies in an accident at sea. The despondent Beth confides in Bella, who is jealous of Beth and betrays her at every turn. Bella participates in an orgy with three men in town in exchange for their promise to rape Beth. Bella then spreads gossip that Beth is the loose woman. The women in town turn on Beth, tying her up, putting her in a sack, and pummeling her. The Dumb One frees her, taking the beating in her place. Beth flees town. Mary then confides in Bella that Beth and Bella were twins- only Beth was thought to inherit the witch's curse. Bella smiles.41

It is unclear from this plot recap whether The Naked Witch was, in fact, a period film, or a modern scenario with period decor and/or flashbacks. What can be construed, however, is the appearance of some motifs and themes which would soon become Milligan standards: treacherous women comprising a malevolent matriarchy, sympathetic hunchbacks, a dysfunctional family, sado-masochistic relationships and an abundance of domestic violence. Yet perhaps the most memorable scene in the film, merely alluded to in the above synopsis, is one in which the "Naked Witch" gives birth to a baby which, according to the filmmaker, was a roast chicken purchased for the crew's supperj49 The advantageous use of found props aside, this extraordinary scene may playfully illustrate Milligan's utter disdain for children, reproduction, in fact the whole of human civilization.

Milligan is on record as having been quite pleased with his work on this film; Bill Landis notes, "He was especially proud of the striking imagery he created when a group of women, all clad in black, rush the heroine on a beach to kill her."" Especially enticing is the notion that much of the finale of the film was shot on the beach, during a snowstorm, an environment which could not but help evoke a stark, neo-realist mise en scene. Milligan

claimed of The Naked Witch: "Quite a movie. Very black and white, very European, like Bicycle Thief, or Open City," a conspicuous reference to two giants of postwar cinema neorealism.51

According to the filmmaker, Milligan was promised a quarter of the box-office receipts on The Naked Witch by Mishkin, who subsequently insisted that the film never showed a profit. Mishkin finally offered Milligan a buyout of $3,000, but in the end only paid him $1,200, citing "other expenses" for the radically-reduced payoff; such was the ironically sado-masochistic partnership between artist and patron, already in full swing by their second outing together.12 Also at some point, Mishkin re-released The Naked Witch as Naked Temptress; it is unknown whether this was the same cut as the original release, or one with additional scenes for the racier sexploitation market - in The Sleaze Merchants, Walter Gay claims that "additional nudie footage was subsequently shot and inserted.""


THEY ALWAYS GO DOWN TO THE LOWEST DEPTHS OF HUMAN SENSUALITY!
SELF - SATISFIED WOMEN WHO NEED NO MEN!
the degenerates
distributed by
J.E.R. PICTURES, INC.

Rare poster art for The Degenerates (1967), a lost Andy Milligan film concerning the barbaric survivors of a nuclear holocaust.

While it would be presumptuous to call this lost film "Bergmanesque" sight unseen, it may be that The Naked Witch was one of Milligan's most daring excursions into that ethereal borderland between the art film, the

underground experiment and the horror-sexploitation melodrama; it can only be hoped that at least one print of this most sought-after Milligan obscurity exists, and will turn up one day.

The Degenerates (1967)

While editing The Naked Witch, Milligan met members of a small production outfit called ASA, and they were so impressed with his ability to produce feature films for paltry sums, they contracted with Milligan to produce three features for them. The Degenerates was one of these, and its current fate seems dire, as it was subject to the whims of one of ASA's financial partners who, from reports, had as much disdain for Milligan's films as did Lewis Mishkin.54 It would appear that The Degenerates was an apocalyptic science-fiction tale, which in itself makes it a most unusual and enticing Milligan curio.55 In the essential Grindhouse: The Forbidden World of `Adults Only" Cinema, Eddie Muller and Daniel Faris give this description, which appears to combine a pressbook synopsis with advertising taglines:

> In the post-holocaust year 2000, a crazed man-hating lesbian Amazon named Violet rules over her sisters on a desolate farm. "Her caresses are soft and the lashes of her whip are sharp!" A trio of men from the Nuclear Attack Survival Center stumble across the farm, and soon the girls learn how to become women "from men who know all the angles." Violet, quite unprepared for the transformation, pitchforks one man to the barn and castrates him.56

From this dizzying plot outline it would appear that Milligan was in rare form, combining a malevolent matriarchy and lesbianism with sado-masochistic punishments and the soonto-be-trademark pitchfork murder. Further, the poster tagline claims, "They Always Go Down to the Lowest Depths of Human Sensuality!" and features two images of rape, suggesting that The Degenerates was very strong in terms of graphic, deviant sexual activity. Ironically, the women protagonists are all named after flowers (Violet, Ivy, Rose), as Milligan was playfully juxtaposing the culturally-

ascribed "gentle" nature of womankind against what he perceived as their true, bestial nature.

According to Hope Stansbury, who played one of the lesbians, The Degenerates was shot on location at an abandoned mansion in Woodstock, New York, at a budget hovering around $10,000. Until such time as a print surfaces, it must remain a mystery as to whether The Degenerates is another lost Milligan masterpiece or, as its owner (and probable destroyer) called it, a "piece of crap.""

Depraved! (1967)

Another sexploitation quickie produced for his ASA partners, Depraved! may be one of Milligan's most realistic and modern films, apparently dealing with many of the decade's cultural trends, including wife-swapping, drug use, transvestitism and domestic violence.58 According to Tim Lucas, Depraved! includes "sex orgies, abortion, pot-smoking, aciddropping, transvestitism, lesbianism, and gay-bashing."59 The poster declares, "A Swinger's Tour of the Far-Out, Unnatural and Forbidden Ways to Love!" and features an image of two men pawing a prostate woman, along with a motif which would appear with disturbing frequency in Milligan's scenarios- a man preparing to punch a woman in the face. Milligan fondly recalled Depraved! as being one of his best early films: "Depraved is really a wonderful study of Manhattanites-these three couples-who go to the dregs of the barrel. In those days that was untried stuff."" By cataloging the naive hypocrisy of the Sexual Revolution, Depraved! likely illustrated in metaphor Milligan's core philosophy, emphasizing the essential defect of humanity, whose every attempt to improve itself is sabotaged by its irrational, bestial nature.

The Filthy Five (1968)

The Filthy Five stands as one of William Mishkin's more inspired "high-concept" projects for the grindhouse sexploitation field. Parodying the title of a popular recent war film, The Dirty Dozen (1967) d: Robert Aldrich) Mishkin managed to milk what he cagily termed "very good" box-office

from this low-rent sexploitation high watermark.61 Thanks to an existing pressbook, we can get a fairly accurate picture of the overall synopsis:

> Johnny Longo (Matt Garth), an up and coming boxer, spends the night with Rose White (Jackie Colton), a prostitute, who is crazy about him, and who, unknown to him, has helped his career through the connections she has in the fighting racket. John is a bit of a sadist and Rose lets him do anything he wants with her. She repels him in many ways, but he always comes back to her for more.
>
> Rita Roman (Anne Linden), a one time really important film star, who slipped into obscurity due to her bad habits and unreliability, is thrashing about in her bed badly in need of a shot of heroin.
>
> Alison (Maha), a lesbian, and Rita's devoted companion for years, arranges for Freakout (Larry Ree), a dope pusher, to give Rita a fix. Freakout won't give Rita the shot without payment, and all Rita has left is her Long Island estate - her money and jewels are gone - Freakout will only deliver if Alison lets him go to bed with Rita. Since Rita has an appointment to discuss a comeback in an important role for a TV series and will be in no condition to keep it unless she gets the fix, Alison consents.
>
> Rita goes to Sidney Hart's (Gerald Jacuzzo) office. Sidney is the agent who got Rita her start 15 years ago when she was 17. The TV series is about a boxer and an actress, and Sidney also has Johnny Longo coming up for the role of the boxer.
>
> Both Rita and Johnny are used to having their own way, and it is evident from the start that there will be friction. They fight and each almost walks out but Sidney pressures them into behaving. Rita privately vows that she will ruin Johnny.
>
> Johnny has a match coming up soon for which he must train. Sidney arranges to have Johnny and his trainer Barney (Nick Orzell) work out at Rita's place, so it will be convenient for them to rehearse.

The more Rita and Johnny see of one another, the more they quarrel. Rita has her affairs with both men and women and Johnny after making an unsuccessful play for Brenda Case (Mary Carter), Sidney's secretary, goes back to Rose despite his intentions not to.

Rose feels she will lose Johnny forever if he becomes successful in TV. When she learns that Rita really hates Johnny, the two plot to get him off the show.

Rita throws a wild orgy, seduces Johnny and gets him to take LSD. Under the influence of the drug, he injures himself so that he can never act or box again. Rita is delighted to be rid of him and Rose is delirious that from now on he will be dependent upon her forever.

This amazing plot sounds like a wild update of some hoary melodramatic templates, with more than a nod to Golden Boy and A Star Is Born. Other sources add some delightful details to this dizzying scenario; Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford note: "The movie builds to a meta-sexual rape scene, with the actress, her gay dope connection, and two other guys exploding on a teenage girl (Magie Dominic). This hostile orgy leads to a brawl on a staircase that injures Johnny."62 Milligan himself recalled that the finale included a drug-induced "bullfight scene," which is the catalyst for protagonist Johnny to leap out the window an act which effectively ruins him for life -and Milligan added that the final shot of the film focused on a chandelier swinging around wildly, which sounds like a perfect metaphor for the empty, ultimately debilitating glitz of the out-of-control, sex-and-drug addled 1960s.63 As the poster suggests, The Filthy Five sounds like "An Orgy to End All Orgies!"

As remarkable as the film itself likely is, Mishkin pulled out all the stops in his marketing of The Filthy Five. The poster features lurid imagery of men-gangs groping a woman, two women in a lesbian caress- and a man about to punch a woman, one of Milligan most emblematic misogynist motifs. One of the poster taglines exclaims, "They loved like animals and fought like beasts to destroy one another," a misanthropic bit of ad copy which could have come from the pen of Milligan himself. Another poster tagline is coyly restrained, perhaps reflecting Mishkin's timidity in certain

instances of exploiting runaway sexual license: "Almost Every Night an Orgy of Depravity!" (And why not every night?) According to Tim Lucas, Mishkin was also somewhat cautious in his newspaper advertising for the film, sending out alternate ad mats which called the film The F------ Five.64

Predictably confusing production still from The Filthy Five (1968) shows one of Milligan's favorite motifs: an effeminate man cowering before a dominating woman (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Yet in addition to becoming one of Mishkin's most successful Milligan releases, The Filthy Five became something of a critic's darling, a feat almost unheard of in sexploitation product relegated to the grindhouse ghetto, a genre largely ignored by the press. In an interview with Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Milligan maintained that Archer Winsten of the New York Post loved the film, calling it the "best `cinema verite' he'd seen."65 According to Milligan actor and colleague Hal Borske, a critic in The Village Voice considered The Filthy Five one of the best films of the year. And Roger Greenspun of The New York Free Press noted enthusiastically

that the film "has a Viscontian feel to it." Greenspun also tellingly noted that, as raw and dynamic and visceral as Milligan's films were, they were not, like "normal" sexploitation product, terribly erotic. He even ventured to state that Milligan might actually be "anti-sex," an insightful and portentous observation.66

Still others agreed with this positive assessment of The Filthy Five. Frederick Forrest, who played the doomed boxer Johnny Longo in the film, under the pseudonym Matt Garth, felt that "Andy had a raw edge, more like a Bergman."67 According to several sources, The Filthy Five was "a favorite" of Andy Warhol's, a statement which, if true, suggests that Warhol and company had kept a close eye on Milligan's raw, cutting-edge sexploitation films from the start, and Milligan's films were therefore almost certainly an influence on Warhol and Paul Morrissey's upcoming art-house hits such as Trash (1970) and others, which cover strikingly similar terrain in conveying a neo-realist depiction of the dark side of the counterculture, including gender-bending characters, drug addiction, sexual violence, group sex and even transvestitism.68 If a print is ever located, it may even be revealed that The Filthy Five plays to some degree like a prototype for the Warhol/Morrissey trilogy (Trash, Heat, Flesh), a disclosure which would shine a harsh light on the current assessment of those films as being brilliant anomalies which seemed to emerge, full-blown, out of nowhere.

Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! (1968)

Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! is an unusual entry in the Milligan sexploitation canon as it sprung from an original story idea from someone other than Milligan, in this case from producer Mishkin. The $10,000 feature was shot largely inside the Caffe Cino, and featured several Cino habitues, including Matt Baylor, Gerald Jacuzzo and Robert Dahdah.69 The story concerns Stan Novak, a working man (Don Williams) married to Jean, a slut (Natalie Rogers). Jean has an affair with Stan's best friend, Eddie (Peter Ratray), and soon their son, Jimmy, dies tragically. Stan goes berserk, and attacks Jean. Finally, Stan and jean fall off a rooftop in the midst of an argument.71

Irregardless of the treacly plot, Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! was apparently a hit right out of the gate, attracting positive reviews from sources as disparate as the New York Post, Variety, the New York Times, and Boxoffice, who duly noted the film was "sharply defined and strikingly, significantly directed and photographed by Andy Milligan on New York City settings."" Although the cagey Mishkin called Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! only "successful," in fact the film was perhaps Mishkin's biggest hit to date of an Andy Milligan production, playing for almost six months at the Rialto Theater on 42nd Street.' Judging from the reviews, Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! may have illustrated that even given a hoary, cliche storyline, Milligan could work wonders weaving intense dialogue, high tragedy and ardent thespians into a momentous melodramatic maelstrom, captured fleetingly by his astute verite camera-eye.

Tricks of the Trade (1968)

Tricks of the Trade is considered one of the "lostest" of the lost Milligan sexploitation titles, according to some observers due to its "overt male homosexuality."73 Luckily, a brief plot recap of the film is offered by Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, likely based on a reading of an extant script:

> [Tricks of the Trade is] ... about a repressed, closety guy who lives under his mother-in-law's thumb. He wanders around Greenwich Village and gets picked up by a bisexual beatnik couple who feed him hallucinogens, have sex with him when he's stoned, and take snapshots of everything. A sinister queen wearing a neck brace uses the photos to blackmail the hapless mook. He fights back, first by telling off his mother-in-law and then by lashing out physically at the queen and his entourage of goons, who wind up knocking him senseless, leaving him an amnesiac Bowery bum.74

An available pressbook synopsis expands greatly (and in a few instances contradicts) the above brief overview:

> Fred and Salina Clark, a handsome, wealthy young married couple living in New York City, find themselves running into problems after five years of happiness. Whether it is Salina's interfering mother, Minnie, or the fact

that the honeymoon is finally over is difficult to say, but Fred seems to have lost much of his interest in Salina as a sex partner.

On one occasion Salina makes a real effort and succeeds in arousing Fred, but Minnie interrupts them just as they are about to consummate the marital act. Fred is disgusted, gets dressed and leaves the house. He wanders to Greenwich Village and goes into a bar.

Stud and Marcy Perkins, a young, hip, swinging couple who are also at the bar, start a conversation with Fred and before long they are speaking on intimate terms. They invite him to their apartment and induce him to join them in taking pot. They are all high and Stud and Marcy not only get undressed and start making love in front of Fred, but get him to join the party. As the "menage-a-trois" progresses, Stud suddenly kisses Fred squarely on the lips. Fred hesitates for a moment before pulling away and feasting on Marcy.

The next day, after quarreling with Salina who wants an explanation of where he's been. Fred decides to see Dr. Pauline Flood, a psychiatrist who a friend had recommended. He tells Dr. Flood how troubled he is because he feels he really welcomed Stud's advances. He also discusses other problems such as his very unhappy youth and his fear of his ever having children and his current problem with his mother-in-law Minnie.

We discover Stud and Marcy are part of a group of misfits of the lowest order, sadists, masochists, lesbians, and that they took pictures of Fred being intimate with Marcy, of the kiss between Fred and Stud, etc., and that they plan to blackmail Fred.

At home, Fred and Salina argue over Salina's mother, and Fred goes out again when Minnie comes over. Minnie finds Fred's address book with Marcy's address and insists that Salina go at once to investigate. She does but gets lost in a run down section of New York's East Village. She runs into two hoodlums who attack and rape her.

When Fred and Dr. Flood get together next they find they are mutually attracted. Not because of this, but because it will help restore his manhood,

Dr. Flood agrees to have a one time only affair with Fred. It does seem to have the `effect on Fred that Dr. Flood hoped it would. She now tells him that most of his troubles are over and that if he will get rid of his mother-in-law that things should be okay. Fred goes home and kicks Minnie out.

Stud calls on Fred, shows him the pictures and threatens to show them to the brokerage firm Fred works for, as well as to Salina, unless Fred meets him and others at a secret rendezvous the next night. Fred goes. There is a wild orgy with all sorts of abnormal acts, sex and otherwise, going on. The leader of the group demands $5000.00 blackmail. Fred refuses and makes an effort to dash for freedom.

From these plot outlines, Tricks of the Trade sounds like one of Milligan's strongest, and most personal sexploitation films, touching on many of his favorite themes, and as with other sexploitation titles, adding more than a touch of autobiographical input. There is the reluctant/repressed heterosexual male, who views sex with a woman as a significant danger and an aesthetic horror. He maybe a closet gay or he maybe merely a neurotic, but he is entirely uneasy about his sexuality. There is the malevolent matriarch, who orchestrates destruction from behind the scenes. There is the swinging couple who turn out to be blackmailers and thugs, in a wonderful, if reactionary indictment of the sexual freedom movement. There is the negative, even evil use of recreational drugs, and there is the virtually obligatory tragic Milligan ending, in which the protagonist is, for all intents and purposes, destroyed by a combination of sexual curiosity and naive interaction with malicious, selfserving peers.71

Although the film itself remains among the lost, a rare theatrical trailer has surfaced thanks to Herculean efforts by devoted Milligan archivist Ian Sundahl. A viewing of this remarkable piece of film offers a priceless, revelatory glimpse into the world of Milligan sexploitation, circa 1968. The trailer opens with several tight close-ups of a man and a woman making love, followed by a verite shot of a man being forcibly injected with intravenous drugs. Next are several scenes of an apparent rape, featuring liberal nudity. Next, an attractive young woman wearing only a bath towel looks at herself in the mirror, and asks to a person off-screen, "Wanna have

sex?" The scene cuts to a close-up of a painedlooking young man (presumably the film's protagonist, Fred) resignedly saying, "Yes." The two embrace and make love in several disorienting shots, followed by Fred rising, and leaving the woman alone on the bed. The woman asks, "What are you doing?" and Fred answers angrily, "Getting dressed!" This little snippet effectively encapsulates Fred's antipathy and fear towards his wife, his compulsive desire to seek sexual solace elsewhere, presumably in the arms of a man. Next follows a sequence where Fred visits the swinging couple mentioned in above synopsis. Male swinger tells woman swinger, "Don't talk dirty!" The woman laughs and barks, "You are too much!" as Fred looks on, amused. The woman adds, coyly, "He means that literally! He likes to brag!" The man counters, "I got a lot to brag about - wanna see?" As the scene cuts, the man rises to unzip his trousers, presumably to show the assembled his prodigious member. Next, Fred is seen whining to another, well-dressed woman, who is not his wife or the female swinger: "I spend five days a week working my ass off, and then spend the weekend arguing with my wife and mother-in-law!" The woman offers Fred some strange advice about the interfering mother-in-law: "Get rid of her!" Fred incredulously asks, "With what -poison?" but the woman retorts, "No-with balls!"

At the trailer's midpoint, the film's title graphic is reversed into "Trade of the Tricks" via crude animation, a nice illustration of the topsy-turvy, gender-bending quality of the film. Scenes follow which show two topless women groping each other, and a man viciously whipping another topless woman, verifying that lesbianism and sado-masochistic violence, two more beloved Milligan themes, are addressed in the film. Another scene follows with the well-dressed woman from before, as she asks another male companion: "If you were me, what would you tell him to do?" The man bitchily replies, "I wouldn't tell him anything, but I would suggest he go out and have some sex!" The woman confirms, "With a woman?" The man snarkily retorts, "No, with a man!" The trailer ends with a series of quick scenes showing men and women in various sexual situations, and includes a startling shot in which two men boldly kiss each other on the mouth, a moment which makes this truly a Milligan film, with the subject of homosexuality conspicuously addressed. These final shots accelerate into a

kaleidoscopic montage of one of Milligan's trademark Dionysian orgy-finales, as one last graphic appears on-screen: "Complete UNCUT Version."

This amazing piece of film, with brazen, shocking content depicted via crude, disorienting verite camerawork, captures well the intensity and energy of the early Milligan experience. On-screen taglines, peppered throughout the trailer, include "Outrageous!," "Blunt!," "Intimate!," "Brutal!," "Frank!," "A Continuous Orgy!" and "Anything and Everything Went!," all of which accurately describe the cutting-edge vigor of this film. With Maggie Rogers listed as the evil mother-in-law, Tricks of the Trade may stand as the quintessential Milligan sexploitation film, and a concerted effort should be made to discover if a print still exists for if not, this likely auspicious piece of film product has successfully escaped to "the other world."

Gutter Trash (1969)

Andy Milligan's last black and white film to receive theatrical release, and his last sexploitation "roughie," was Gutter Trash, which starred Candy Hammond as protagonist "Pussy" Johnson. (Milligan married Hammond early in 1968, and may have still been wed to her when filming Gutter Trash.)76 The story uses a flashback framing device, something rare in the cinema of Milligan, as Pussy Johnson tells the story of her downfall to a psychiatric doctor in a prison where she is incarcerated. Pussy began her big-city career as a nude model, but is soon seduced by libertine photographer Bill Larch (David Smith). Bill introduces Pussy to his fast friends, who include perverts, lesbians, junkies and rapists. Pussy eventually meets a handsome but straight-laced fellow called Nick (Eddie Frackman), who falls for her and wants to take her away from all this debauchery. Pussy has become addicted to a life of casual sex, however, and Nick abandons her. Forlorn, Pussy attends a party with Bill and his gang, overdosing on drugs and watching in horror as the gathering degenerates into a depraved, violent orgy. At film's end, Pussy meditates on the vicissitudes of fate, as well as her own mistake in forgoing the "square" guy and opting instead for a thrilling but tragic life of cheap kicks.77

Gutter Trash sounds, from the above synopsis, like any number of sexploitation films of the same time period. The "good girl gone bad in New

York City" theme, although a common exploitation film trope, almost begins by now to sound a bit autobiographical, as small-town boy Milligan seemed to find his downfall, as well as his career, after landing in the Big Apple.78 Drug use, perverse couplings, and gay/lesbian trysts were also de rigueur for this type of film. However, it would appear that Milligan spiced up his own treatment of this cliche narrative template by the use of extremely strong language, and abundant female (and especially male) nudity, long before they became fashionable.79 According to Jimmy McDonough, Screw magazine hated Gutter Trash, giving it a scathing "review," presumably because the film, as well as Milligan's other sexploitation films, depicted sex as a dirty, evil, even lunatic act, in stark contrast to the typical misogynist viewpoint, wherein sex between men and women was expected to be simplistic, guilt-free, and above all erotic to the male audience member.80

Nightbirds (1968)

In the "revolutionary" summer of 1968, Andy Milligan ventured to England to make films for one Leslie Elliot, who operated a small distribution outfit called Cinemedia Films. Although a multi-picture contract was signed, only two films were produced for Cinemedia before the deal soured due to interference from Elliot's father. Nightbirds was the first of the features actually made for Cinemedia.$' A moody study of sexual deviance shot in black and white, Nightbirds was never released theatrically, and only one 35mm print of it was known to exist, that in the hands of Milligan himself. It is only in 2012 that a home video release of Nightbirds has occurred. The BFI-Flipside dual-format DVD release is cause for celebration, foremost for the chance to see one of the filmmaker's most notorious and elusive efforts. But there are other reasons to champion this particular project, one being the extraordinary story of its journey to its grateful audience. Filmmaker Nicolas Winding Refn (Valhalla Rising) Drive, et al.), apparently an ardent fan of Milligan's work, purchased the only known 35mm film print of Nightbirds from Milligan biographer Jimmy McDonough, through online auction site eBay, and immediately approached the British Film Institute suggesting a possible DVD release.82 Considering Nightbirds' London-centric location and British production heritage, BFI readily agreed that Nightbirds deserved its first-ever wide release, some

thirty-odd years after its production. In addition to the lone 35mm print, additional footage was supplied by Mike Vraney of Something Weird Video, bringing the finished, remastered film up to its most likely original length.

Nightbirds is a joy and a revelation on many levels, as many of Milligan's main themes stand front and center in this most personal film. The destructive, dysfunctional, "dumb" heterosexual couple, vividly invoked in most Milligan films of this vintage, was never drawn more savagely, bluntly and critically than here. Dee and Dink are, in fact, almost surreal in their idiocy and malice, cartoon sketches of how Milligan perceived the denizens of the sexual revolution, the compromised and calculating "young alives" of poster ballyhoo. The deterioration of a sexual relationship into a violent, emotionally cruel fight for survival is in Nightbirds given a force and clarity which make similar depictions elsewhere in the Milligan canon seem almost tame. Also, an older woman acts as sexual catalyst and surrogate mother figure to Dee and Dink, with ominous hints of sexual misconduct strewn wildly about, clearly standing in for the domineering, corrupt mother figure seen in almost all Milligan films (and certainly yet another dark-as-pitch homage to the filmmaker's own mother). As in several other Milligan films, an unwanted pregnancy symbolizes both personal and societal collapse. Nightbirds illustrates the sexual revolution as viewed by conservative iconoclast Milligan - death, deception and murder - shockingly illustrating the inherent malevolence behind all reckless human breeding.

Yet most conspicuously, in Nightbirds Dee and Dink embark on a regulation sadomasochistic relationship, with Dink the subservient slave, and Dee the domineering master. In fact, Nightbirds may be Milligan's most "Masochistic" film, that is, the one which owes the most to the writings and philosophy of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Further, there are reasons to believe that Milligan had Sacher-Masoch's legendary 1870 tract Venus in Furs in mind when scripting Nightbirds, as there are more than a few ominous parallels to the short novel in Milligan's postmodern treatise on one of the oldest sexual dynamics in the world - weak male and powerful female in the grip of sexual addiction. In each text, a deferential man willingly submits to physical, emotional and sexual dominance to a cold, calculating female; both texts feature an emphasis on groveling, foot worship, and (at

least allusions to) the oral sexual servicing of the female; both of the male protagonists have an older woman as a friend, who offer solace and companionship; in both texts the dominant woman uses mocking laughter - among other cruel tricks- as a weapon; both women use the presence of other men to ignite jealousy in their lover; both women had previous lovers who contracted fatal illnesses; both women profess themselves to be "modern," opting for numerous short affairs over one long (monogamous) one. This last parallel may be the key point in both Nightbirds and Venus in Furs, that the woman gains power over the man because the man foolishly believes in romantic love, as opposed to the cruel sexual dynamics actually seen in nature, a dynamic at which both Sacher-Masoch's and Milligan's women excel. Even more profound are certain thematic consistencies between the two texts. Both texts clearly pontificate that, as Sacher-Masoch states succinctly, "man and woman are natural enemies."" The parameters of this perpetual rift between the sexes is articulated throughout Venus in Furs by the hero's mistress Wanda, who notes casually, "By making man so vulnerable to passion, nature has placed him at woman's mercy,"84 a sentiment which aligns nicely with Nightbirds' philosophical current and narrative thrust.

The film opens as a young man (Berwick Kaler) strolls aimlessly along London streets in the pouring rain. As the credits appear, the image freezes, and the din of the rainy city streets is rendered mute - nicely juxtaposing the cacophony of the bustling social environment against the man's apparently vacant, empty thought processes. The man pukes on the street, suggesting a very ill psyche, and moans out loud, "I wish I were dead!," confirming in short order that he is one of Milligan's archetypal doomed, diseased heterosexual males.

Enter Woman - seemingly from out of nowhere - who approaches and soothes the man's rattled nerves. The woman, introduced as Dee (Julie Shaw) takes the man, introduced as Dink, back to her flat, and Milligan's most devastating deconstruction of the heterosexual paradigm is begun. Dink thanks Dee for her kindness, to which she quips- only half joking-that she likes to rescue "stray dogs and cats," which prompts Dink to quip, "You're sort of a Florence Nightingale of the streets!" Dee ponders, darkly, "That's

one way to look at it," suggesting that she may or may not be a beneficent character. Dee leads Dink to her flat, in a lengthy walk up several flights of stairs, this protracted - and carefully recorded - narrative ascent telegraphing, in trademark Milligan fashion, the protagonist's inevitably tragic descent "back to earth" at the story's end.

Reaching Dee's flat, Dink compliments Dee on it, to which she replies, "Heaven or Hell, whichever way you want to look at it," another most ominous comment which telegraphs to the astute viewer this woman's antonymous status. As Dee and Dink make love for the first time, the conspicuous shadow of a cross hovers above them in the background, perhaps serving as sinister code for impending male sacrifice. The reference may also recall Sacher-Masoch's observations that "It was Christianity, whose cruel emblem, the cross, has always seemed to me somewhat horrific, that first brought an alien and hostile element into nature and its innocent instincts."85 Early next morning, the lovers are startled awake by the loud crash of a pigeon, who crashes into skylight - a very obvious "omen" meant to alert the audience to Nightbirds' allegorical shift. The pigeon is ill, and needs care, as does Dink, and so Dink immediately identifies with his surrogate, naming him "Homer." Naming the bird after the blind Greek poet of legend alludes to several things- the wandering hero on an epic journey to achieve great accomplishments amidst fearsome obstacles-or may be nothing more than Dink's tongue-in-cheek nickname for a wayward "homing pigeon." Yet this rather obvious dues ex machina clarifies- if the audience has not figured it out yet -that Dink is Dee's new "pigeon," another helpless stray animal, a mark, a target, a victim.

Dink's fatal flaw - his Achilles heel - is soon revealed, as he confesses to Dee that he has just left his mother, after living with her his whole life. When Dee opines that it is unusual for an adult man to be living at home with mother, Dink replies defensively, "that's one of the reasons I left," confirming that there were other, likely more disturbing reasons he fled mommy's "nest." Dink immediately gravitates to another woman who promises the potential to be another nurturing influence, so it is clear that Dink is psychologically broken by his mother, and cannot live without the influence of a stern maternal figure. One of the first things Dink does for

Dee is to massage her, a function which he declares he also performed ritually for his mother. Dee soon realizes that the only way to tame Dink is to play the mother, alternately scolding and babying him, and this she does with ruthless, calculating efficiency.

Dee is one of the spookiest, vilest female characters ever to grace the silver screen. Ostensibly beautiful and engaging, Dee turns out to be entirely diabolical. Her cold, austere beauty changes effortlessly from sublime to frightening, depending on her mood. Dee also seems quite neurotic, with many emotional tics-including a predisposition to sudden anger - which makes her out to be an atypical occurrence of the "hippie" archetype as portrayed in late 1960s cinema. Her casual pick-up of Dink, her enigmatic history with her bisexual neighbor, and her references throughout the film to other lovers, paints her as a "free lover," a euphemism for a loose young woman who refuses to consider the monogamous social contract imposed on her gender by phallocentric society. Through her actions towards Dink, Dee is also clearly revealed to be a sadist, making her apparent reputation for adopting stray dogs and cats quite distressing, as one must thus assume that she rescues these homeless animals only to torture them to death - a troubling prospect which is sadly confirmed by her final act towards Homer the pigeon.

Yet Dee is far more than a garden-variety neurotic or reckless slut. She appears out of nowhere - like an apparition - in order to aid the sad-sack Dink in his throes of illness. Her power over Dink, and other men, seems to be far more than natural - Dee seems able to actually hypnotize and paralyze her victims, like the black widow spider. Certain scenes suggest something even more malign. Walking arm in arm in the bright sunshine, Dee coos darkly, "Let's make this our last trip in daylight," a comment which suggests vampiric tendencies, a notion reinforced when Dee subsequently states, "I feel like a vampire in the sunlight when I'm with you." Following an attack on Dink which leaves him bleeding on the sidewalk, Dee is seen actually lusting over Dink's blood. After driving away Dink's only other friend, leaving him helpless and isolated, Dee's face takes on a malevolent cast quite unnerving. And late in the film, Dee forces Dink to prostrate himself, Christ-like, against the roof stairwell wall, and she then begins to perform a strange

ritual before him, gesticulating her hands in such a way as to suggest some sort of psychic transferal of energy. When Dink innocently speaks, Dee is enraged, saying "You've ruined it!" What did he ruin -a spell she was trying to cast on her subject? Indeed, Dee's wholly negative impact on the community, her entirely successful efforts to extinguish the lives of weak men, suggests something more than mere luck or neuroses. Put bluntly, Dee appears to be a female demon, along the lines of the mythological Lilith, a cold, calculating mistress of the dark powers who cleverly, and casually, lures men to their extinction. As such, we may assume that Dee stands for "Demon," and that Milligan-at his most purely misogynist hereuses her in Nightbirds to illustrate his philosophy that females are nothing less than supernatural entities who tempt and destroy weak mortal men - or as Sacher-Masoch noted, "To my mind the poetic and the diabolical have always been united in woman."86

A stunning later scene clarifies certain aspects of Dee's past, as well as providing an expositional revelation which colors her actions in a truly malefic shade. Either out of boredom, or a rare twinge of subconscious guilt, Dee calls up her mother, who looks to be upper middle-class (we first see her tending to a lush garden) and she is attended by a maid). The distraught matriarch is alternately ecstatic and horrified to hear from her child, who apparently has been missing for some time - Dee is a runaway, a revelation which explains many things. Dee mysteriously inquires about "the baby," and is told that it is near death. She also inquires about a former lover named Jack, and is told that he too is having a rough time, because, as the mother groans, "Syphilis is ugly!" This devastating (if a bit soapoperatic) revelation now paints Dee in an even more demonic light - she is a runaway slut who contracted a deadly sexual disease, and has effectively - and knowingly- passed it on to her lovers and children. This is a morally monstrous, unconscionable act, especially seeing as how it has decimated the life of an innocent new-born. Yet the revelation also suggests something even more horrific - as Dee is now quite likely at the tail end of tertiary syphilis, her odd, mentally unstable behavior may illustrate that the disease has rendered her quite mad. Dee is now positioned as an immoral, and insane female demon who lures men to their demise, a shockingly cruel sketch of the amoral sexual libertine of the time.

This dire revelation also explains the fate of a character seen earlier, a blind street musician named Tom, whom Dee chats with briefly. In their short conversation, it is hinted that Tom's present state is due to Dee's intervention and, now knowing her past history, we can see how. Tom, once likely a promising young artist on the London music scene, has been reduced by his dalliance with the demon Dee, into a pathetic, sightless beggar, forced to endlessly perform as a one-man band for handouts in order to survive on the streets. A more grim depiction of the wages of sin - nor a more damning indictment of the "carefree" sexual revolution -cannot be imagined.

In stark contrast to the conniving Dee, Dink is a clear case of arrested development, a socially retarded young man who also clearly has a classical Oedipal complex to deal with. He lived with his mother until shortly before meeting Dee, leaving her only because he couldn't take any more - of what is unclear, although Dink does state that his mother was "dominant," and an alcoholic. These ominous references suggest that Dink was therefore the submissive one in a twisted mother-son partnership, and that this submission took the form of emotional or physical abuse. Considering the corrupt Milligan universe, sexual servitude is not to be ruled out either. Dink would certainly not be the first or last Milligan hero to have suffered sexual indiscretions with his own mother, and one of the reasons for his escape may have been that he felt increasingly perverse and self-loathing about the unhealthy alliance. Yet Dink is clearly a classic Milligan heterosexual male; as soon as he leaves mommy, he seeks out - and sadly finds- another dominant woman in Dee, who continues intact the master-slave relationship Dink had with his mother. Although his mother may have abused him, deep down she likely shared a sense of devotion and protection, yet with the horrifying Dee, Dink learns the hard way that seeking that same unconditional love in the harsh world of predatory neurotics is a suicide mission. Dink is an innocent, a "babe in the woods," and falls for Dee's manipulation without a thought to possible ulterior motives. This, too, maybe the mother's fault, for in sheltering and overprotecting Dink, she made him unfit for living in the real world. This, too, is a crime of the Milligan mother figure. The saddest part of Dink's tragic decline may be his wellintentioned but fatal desire to transfer his Oedipal lust for mother to a woman his own age, this clueless project being his death sentence. In short,

Dink - having had a devoted if controlling mother as his only role model - yearns for a continuance of that unconditional mother-love (known popularly as "Agapic") in his feeble attempts at adult love. In sharp contrast, Dee has no such emotional crutch, seeking purely sensual thrills from her love affairs, a pastime known commonly as "Erotic." Further, Dee pursues love as if it were a game or contest, with rules, strategies and (perforce) winners and losers, a philosophy sometimes known as "Ludic."

Dink's Oedipal fixation is underscored brilliantly with the introduction of a third character, a friend of his named Mabel. Mabel is a middle-aged woman who has retired from the world's oldest profession, and lives off the meager pension of her cancer-ridden (and unseen) partner. Mabel openly flirts with the much younger Dink, telling him in no uncertain terms that if their ages were closer, she would gladly be his lover. Dink, alternately, enjoys being "babied over" by Mabel, and surely considers her a mother figure, even stating at one point that he wishes she were his real mother. The aggressively physical, shamelessly flirtatious relationship between Mabel and Dink is certainly meant to suggest the barely checked lust possible between mother and son, and this obligatory specter of incest in a Milligan film may also explain some of the "other things" which led Dink to flee his own, overbearing matriarch. With both Dee and Mabel, Dink is merely reliving his experience with his biological mother with these voluntary surrogates. And as with similar characters in other Milligan films, Mabel may illustrate in grotesque relief how the filmmaker perceived (or romanticized) his problematic relationship with his own mother.

The other main character in Nightbirds is Ginger, a strange young man who appears to be either the landlord or superintendent of the building where Dee lives. Ginger occupies the same narrative space in Nightbirds as the obligatory hunchback/freak character in Milligan's horror films, acting as both Greek chorus and expositional tool. Flamboyantly effeminate, with a striking Irish brogue, Ginger is a crass, catty male, who serves to clarify certain expositional points within the film. It is through his conversation with Dee that we first discover that Dee has had other lovers to her flat before Dink, and that none of them stay very long. Ginger refers to Dee's lovers as strays, like the cats and dogs which she purportedly rescues. Later

in the film, when the jealous Ginger wants to know how much longer Dink will be living with her, Dee coyly replies, "It won't be long now," suggesting that both parties know Dee's agenda with her men -to lure them only to crush them. Several things about Ginger are obscure, including his sexuality. Although appearing to be quite "gay," Ginger also stresses to Dee that he misses their time together, one reason he wants to know when her latest pigeon, Dink, will leave. This suggests that Dee and Ginger have some sort of relationship, but of what sort is unclear. It is certainly possible that Ginger is bisexual, and has been one of Dee's sex partners. Yet considering Dee's clearly sadistic streak, it is also conceivable that Ginger uses Dee as a dominant partner in punishment and bondage rituals, perhaps allowing her to whip, torture and otherwise abuse him. As for Ginger's occupation - other than his duties at the apartment building - that seems to be clarified by two statements. When Dee asks Ginger for some money to tide her over, Ginger tells her he is almost broke, because business has been slow recently, stating, "Can't keep my mind on my work...." When he does finally give in to Dee, lending her his last remaining cash, he quips, "Thank god I'm a bloody sucker!" It thus seems safe to conclude that Ginger is a male prostitute - soon to be a very fashionable character in cinema with films like Midnight Cowboy (1969, d: John Schlesinger). Yet with his mercenary, duplicitous and amoral nature, Ginger is yet another problematic - if not outright critical - portrayal of a homosexual by a gay filmmaker, whose ambivalence on the subject is never far from the surface in his art.

Both Dink and Dee are portrayed throughout Nightbirds as being somewhat infantile in their psychologies. Dink is a mere boy thrust headlong into the adult world by an overbearing mother, but Dee, far more sophisticated superficially, is eventually revealed to be merely a petty tyrant, in essence a spoiled brat spiraling out of control due to excessive permissiveness on the part of parents and society, neither of which seem to be able to rein her in. This infantile psychological state verges, in both cases, on severe neurosis (Dee is at least a sociopath) more likely a psychopath). Milligan often depicted characters teetering on the edge of regressive madness, and Nightbirds in no exception. When the starving couple venture outside to scrounge up some grub, they bounce along together, singing the "HiHo!" song of the dwarfs from Walt Disney's animated Snow White and

the Seven Dwarfs. This bit of carefree spontaneity demonstrates the pair's inherent childishness certainly, their naivete to the harshness of their surroundings, but also may signal incipient madness, as the singing of nursery rhymes and children's songs by daft adults does in other Milligan films such as Seeds of Sin. Subsequent events reveal Dee to be quite insane, but Dink also has a very curious relation to madness, although far less pronounced - perhaps to Milligan's thinking a male would have to be mad to even entertain the idea of letting a woman lord over him sexually and emotionally. For instance, when Dink becomes sexually excited, he appears to suffer some form of seizure - at times bordering on an epileptic fit - so deep is the emotional trauma connected to his sexual arousal.

Although they are portrayed in the screenplay as random strangers who meet in the fateful night to forge their tense, painful and eventually tragic liaison, even a casual glance at the protagonists Dink and Dee reveals that the two share a remarkable facial resemblance - in fact, they look so similar, they could easily be brother and sister - and even their interchangeable names suggest labeling by an identical party, i.e., a common parent. So even though sibling conflict, and incest, are not part of the overt textual narrative of Nightbirds, they most certainly figure subtextually, and thus strongly reinforce one of Milligan's favorite narrative tropes- warring and lusting between mutually dependent siblings. Dink and Dee seem fatally attracted to, yet simultaneously repulsed by each other, locked as are so many Milligan heroes in a obsessive-compulsive bond which boasts all the elements of a sado-masochistic relationship, a tryst which molds a diabolical concoction of love and hate into a giant ball of perverse ritual activity.

As the partnership becomes ever more unbalanced, Dee asks more and more of Dink, at one point taunting him, "Prove that you love me!" and forcing the hapless lad to perform oral sex on her. From Dink's notable distaste at the idea, one may assume that he - and perhaps all "normal" men according to Milligan -find this act of submission to the female completely humiliating. Dink's almost traumatic reaction to the request also suggests that perhaps this unsavory task was one that he performed dutifully, if reluctantly, on his own mother, which makes its resurrection here almost a form of male rape. Following Dink's servicing of her, Dee seems almost

inordinately happy -an observation which takes on a most sinister tone when it is later revealed that she carries late-stage Syphilis, and so has knowingly, even wantonly, infected her "stray pigeon," all but pronouncing his death sentence.

Finally tiring of her prey, Dee goes in for the kill, allowing her demonic self to dominate. First strangling Homer and placing the corpse on the rooftop where Dink will surely see it, she then tells her other "pigeon" that she is sick to death of him, and must immediately vacate her flat. At first incredulous, as the truth of her change of heart sinks in, Dink seems like a man mortally wounded; he shudders and whines and holds his head and seems in the throes of complete emotional collapse. Since the constant support of a woman is his only source of strength, the withdrawal of this support all but renders the poor sap comatose. Realizing that he now has nowhere to go, Dink slowly climbs the stairs to the roof and, seeing the body of poor Homer - his brother in spirit - leaps for it, falling off the roof to his death, along with his only ally in this harsh world. This fall from a high place serves as shorthand for the more common occurrence of Milligan heroes running, tumbling or falling down stairs in order to signal their moral collapse - having been cursed by a demon, Dink's descent is lightning fast. In an absolutely chilling coda, another indigent, very young man - almost a boy, in fact - hobbles along the street, dragging a large sack presumably carrying all his worldly possessions. The sack drops to the ground, spilling its contents on the pavement. The boy looks positively anguished at the calamity, as it seems to represent to him the final collapse of his short, tortured life. Suddenly, like an phantom, Dee appears and asks the poor lad if he needs any help. Freeze frame: The She-Demon of London has chosen her next victim.

The stunning visual look of Nightbirds gives a good idea of what Milligan's lost U.S.lensed sexploitation films (The Promiscuous Sex, The Naked Witch, The Filthy Five, Tricks of the Trade, etc.) probably looked like, making their absence all the more sorrowful. Nightbirds is filmed in gloomy, grainy black and white, in stark contrast to the color-saturated "Swinging London" usually captured by pop filmmakers of the day, but highly suggestive of the somber neo-realism seen in bleak postwar treatises

on human malice such as Open City (1945, d: Roberto Rossellini) and The Bicycle Thief (1947, d: Vittorio De Sica). The message is clear - the depressive, suicidal addiction between males and females is always a mournful, deadly force, never to be celebrated, always to be pitied. Indeed, Nightbirds may be the bleakest depiction of a failed sexual relationship ever caught on film. The scenario primarily unfolds in stiflingly claustrophobic, sparsely furnished interior spaces, so common to Milligan's films and so redolent to the barren emotional spirit invoked by dumb heterosexuals in lust. (To verify Milligan's knack for filming high drama in small spaces in such a way as to make them seem virtual coffins) one need only compare such scenes in Nightbirds to similar settings in James Hill's Lunch Hour (1963), in which warring lovers wail and moan in a small hotel room; compared to Milligan's smothering mise en scene, the scenes in Hill's film look positively expansive.) The occasional exterior scene in Nightbirds merely reinforces the grim atmosphere in which the characters are ensconced, clarifying that for these accursed souls there is no escape, as they will carry their demonic energy with them whither they go.

Amazingly, Nightbirds manages to depict "Swinging London" as nothing more than a redux of a Victorian-era ghetto, where the poor in spirit grovel, lust and die, and life is short, brutal and galled. Who but Milligan could turn what is ostensibly a casual depiction of the sexual revolution into a tragic, harrowing Gothic horror piece? The cartoony Dickensian squalor of the "Nightbirds)" love nest, with its crumbling walls and spare furnishings, signals that Nightbirds was intended to be a Victorian melodrama in spirit, wherein morals are the one and only subject. People are as desperate in "modern" London - selling their souls for a place to flop - as in the bleakest period of the late-Victorian era. When the lovebirds become hungry, they don't go to a restaurant or a grocery store - they go hunting for scraps in trash bins, feasting on other men's garbage. The message in Nightbirds is short, sweet and brutal: nothing ever changes in the human condition. In every epoch, the poor, the predatory, the disenfranchised, live suffer and die in gruesome, horrific ways, and any philosophy to the contrary, any sense that there is progress, a new era at hand, is dangerous delusion. As addressed in other films, to Milligan the sexual revolution was merely another instance, endemic throughout history, of the strong exploiting the weak, this time

using cheap sex as the lure, making this so-called "revolution" actually one of the regressive and primitive historical events of an otherwise largely enlightened century. As for the alwaysacrimonious, often-fatal lure of women to men, Nightbirds depicts the inevitable result mercilessly, again echoing similar observations by Sacher-Masoch, "I suddenly saw with alarming clarity how blind passion and lust have always led men, into the net of woman's treachery, into poverty, slavery and death.""

Throughout Nightbirds, Dink is portrayed as an mindless, passive buffoon, a cipher who has no mind of his own and is completely beholden to the cruel whims of the women who surround him; it was no accident that Milligan named his "walking dick" using a derogatory current slang term for a dullard. Representing the modern heterosexual woman, Dee is painted as a vicious, manipulative, sex-hungry Amazon, whose only goal in life seems to be luring men to their sexual demise. The ongoing, derogatory admonition of the heterosexual male as being essentially thought of as "queer" is a strikingly blatant bit of Milligan philosophy, and probably quite accurately reflects his feelings towards both parties of the "straight" sexual construct - the male is a walking prick who is better off gay, and the woman is a c--t, a man-eater, an Amazon, even a self-described vampire.

Milligan himself apparently had mixed reactions to Nightbirds. According to Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, who interviewed Milligan in the early 1980s, "Andy had a great affinity for Nightbirds,"88 yet in Jimmy McDonough's biography of Milligan, the filmmaker dismissed the film as "extremely infantile."89 Indeed, Nightbirds is so brutally "adult" in its subject matter it almost seems narratively childish. As well it is a very theatrical piece, as expected from the filmmaker's extensive Off Broadway background. This is fortunate, for a highly-strung melodrama such as Nightbirds must be filmed this way for maximum emotional impact; a postmodern Greek tragedy is no place for aesthetic subtlety or method acting.

The fact that Nightbirds takes place largely in one tiny room, a claustrophobic space in which the participants seem trapped rather than ensconced, underscores the scenario's efficacy as an allegorical piece on the

stifling nature of traditional heterosexual relations, in which two socially brainwashed, psychologically fragile egos are goaded by pressures both internal and external to hide out from the world at large by escaping into their own private, delusional psycho-sexual landscape, a self-imposed womb which confines rather than protects, and all too soon turns into an unbearable prison from which escape is difficult, and often only through violent action. This narrative template is reminiscent of much modern experimental theater, including the work of Samuel Beckett and Eugene lonesco. In sum, we must applaud Refn for his admirable efforts in rescuing Nightbirds from certain oblivion, as we must thank McDonough for making sure this rare cultural artifact found a good home. One might even dare to hope that Refn-whose films often bear a striking resemblance to those of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of Milligan's contemporaries- has future plans to bring McDonough's brilliant biography of Milligan, The Ghastly One, to life as a biopic. If anyone could bring this enigmatic talent to life on the big screen, it would be Refn, whose scenarios and sensibilities- if not always his aesthetic -seem decidedly in sync with those of his grindhouse hero.

As unique as Nightbirds is, it covers a narrative premise being explored elsewhere in cinema at the time. The most prominent is Robert Altman's That Cold Day in the Park, released in the U.S. in the summer of 1969. The film features Sandy Dennis as a mentallydisturbed heiress who picks up an apparently homeless man and proceeds to make him her emotional plaything. While this film and Nightbirds share little in specific narrative and aesthetic traits, there are some striking similarities: both feature a mentally-disturbed woman picking up an indigent male for an emotional and sexual partner; both "pick-ups" occur portentously in the rain; both relationships feature sado-masochistic elements, and eventually escalate to violence. Even more intriguing is the fact that the source novel of That Cold Day in the Park, penned by Richard Miles and first published in 1965, features a similar scenario but with two male prostitutes involved in the "grifting" of the lonely older woman. Filmmaker Altman conspicuously removed this element of the novel - surely for economic reasons foremost, as the commercial potential for a mainstream film about two gays at that time was nil-but which aligns his film strongly with Nightbirds, which was purportedly filmed almost a year earlier. It is impossible to ascertain whether Milligan or Altman were

aware of each other's work (or even existence) but the parallels between the two productions are noteworthy.

Another film with notable parallels to Nightbirds is Entertaining Mr. Sloane (1970). This filming of iconoclastic playwright Joe Orton's play illuminating the radical sexual politics which augmented a fierce generational turf war in 1960s England, is presented in the film in a softened, but still aggressively confrontational manner. As in Nightbirds, Mr. Sloane's narrative trigger is the pick-up of a seemingly homeless male by a sexually curious woman, and the resulting problematic relationship which ensues. Both films center on a perverse love triangle, with the emphasis on a charismatic, narcissistic bisexual man, and a sexually aggressive older woman featuring prominently. In Mr. Sloane, flowers and graveyards-two of Milligan's recurring symbols-are here used as emblems of lost innocence and the ravages of aging. Mr. Sloane is an opulent, big-budget production, with selfconscious stylization and an unfortunate but inevitable nod to the psychedelic pop culture template of the day, in stark contrast to Nightbirds' gloomy monochrome ambiance and threadbare neo-realism; yet were these antithetical aesthetic conceits removed, the two films could easily be "first cousins." Perhaps even more than Milligan, Joe Orton carried on in the tradition of Jean Genet during his tragically short moment of fame.

As for Nightbirds, it is one of Milligan's finest films- an extraordinary achievement - even if its moral, borrowed intact from Sacher-Masoch, is bleak and hateful: "Woman, as Nature created her and as man up to now has found her attractive, is man's enemy; she can be his slave or his mistress but never his companion."" In Nightbirds, the psychotic female's serial quest to annihilate all those too feeble to resist her siren song tragically intersects with the dumb male's "Homeric" journey to escape the clutches of a tyrannical mother - to replace her with a "good" woman - a fool's mission which renders him diseased, deranged and defunct.

* * *

With this series of undoubtedly engrossing, possibly brilliant films, Milligan managed to skewer the pretenses of the so-called "sexual revolution" perhaps better than any other artist of the time. In these films,

Milligan stated concisely that sex without true love (which Milligan must have thought an impossibility), is merely dumb lust, and people are invariably tripped up by their lustful desires, as low temptation of this sort can only lead to moral and mental punishment. To the dumb hope of the sexual Utopians, the Milligan sexploitation films depict with vigor and honesty the always-problematic nature of heterosexual relations, which can by definition be no better than the moral and psychological make-up of each participant. Added to this recipe for disaster is the tendency of all relationships to fall into a master-slave, potentially sado-masochistic dynamic which then tends towards exploitation of one party by another, rarely achieving any lasting democracy between partners. The addition of drugs to the equation is the last nail in the coffin, according to Milligan's thesis, because the use of seductive mind-altering substances by weaklings always leads to despair, dissolution and destruction. Finally, there is the always-precarious love/hate relationship Milligan had with the gay movement, and of course his own homosexuality, which comes out in fitful, contradictory ways, from the brazen inclusion of overtly gay characters in some of the films, to the cruel, reactionary "bashing" of same gays, often in the very same scenario. Even the brutal violence so consistently depicted in even the earliest Milligan films mirrored a dark reality; as moral guidelines eroded due to increased licentiousness, a slippery slope made even more treacherous by the ominous ascendancy of recreational drugs, mankind's essential savage nature could not but be unlocked, leading to cruel and vicious attacks on women, and men, and spiraling to the epidemic of sexually-fueled killings which crescendoed in the late 1980s and early 1990s.91 Ultimately, the absurdly rose-colored "sexual freedom" movement achieved little, possibly even doing more harm than good. It took decades for commentators to reluctantly admit that the whole sexual revolution had been a huge, messy flop, with some truly alarming cultural offspring, but artists such as Milligan could have told them that from the start.

In addition to the provocative, cutting-edge subject matter, it would appear from all evidence that the Milligan sexploitation films were significantly enhanced by additional aesthetic and stylistic quirks which made them raw, visceral and unlike most other grindhouse sexploitation cinema of the day. Perhaps the most important of these was the use of a

filming style used widely at the time in documentary film production and known as cinema verite. Traditional cinema verite used hand-held cameras and live, synchronous sound to create an immediacy and realism lacking in most narrative-based filming techniques, which relied on stages, static camera and greatly modified sound to create its imagery. In addition, Milligan almost invariably shot his films in (often squalid) real-life locations, giving the resultant melodramas an unabashedly neo-realist feel.

Although cinema verite had its brief moment in the sun during the mid- to late 1960s, there were proponents of the basic theory much earlier; Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov was an early advocate of cinema which was dedicated to "`observing and recording life as it is.....92 To Vertov, who made early experiments of this theory in the 1920s, the honest editing of human situations, without resorting to manipulative tricks of the camera, was a cornerstone of authentic cinema, and the recording of actual, location sound was also a vital element.93 The move towards more authentic depictions of human activity, especially in real settings, was greatly expanded after World War II with the ascendancy of Italian neo-realism, thanks to talents such as Cesare Zavattini, Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rossellini. But it was not until the 1960s when cinema verite flourished, almost exclusively in the documentary genre, with filmmakers such as Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, D.A. Pennbaker and Al Mayles all major figures in the movement.94

The use of portable, hand-held cameras which recorded live sound, originally designed for the news media, was now appropriated as a vital tool for the creation of longer films, documenting many forms of human social interaction. The nature of verite filming was more likely to capture spontaneous moments of uncontrolled and unpredicted human activity, and this raw, frank, often surprising aspect of the style is what endeared it to many. By following its subjects around tirelessly, verite cinema has a visceral quality and an immediacy which was sorely lacking in even most "documentary" film of the day, which were edited and otherwise manipulated to create a conspicuously "fake" chronicle of supposed actual events. Two of the classics of the verite documentary movement, which show the style at its absolute peak, are Medium Cool (1968, d: Haskell

Wexler), which chronicled with an unflinching eye the ugly riots at the 1968 Democratic Convention, and Titicut Follies (1967, d: Frederick Wiseman), a harrowing look at a real-life Massachusetts insane asylum.

Yet cinema verite had exciting possibilities for the expansion of the cinema experience which, to some, took it entirely out of the realm of use solely as a tool for documentarians; as Stephen Mamber noted in his study of the genre, cinema verite "deserves a place of its own as an alternative kind of cinema -neither documentary (as usually practiced) nor fiction (though often telling a story)."95 It is thus most curious, and extremely disappointing, that more filmmakers did not embrace cinema verite for use in the development of narrative cinema -Andy Milligan's lost sexploitation films may comprise the largest single body of what might be termed "narrative verite" film ever attempted, making its absence all the more deplorable. Perhaps the only filmmaker who consciously used verite techniques in a narrative drama template was John Cassavettes (1929-1989), whose films such as Faces (1967) and Husbands (1970), featured many experimental techniques, including improvised dialogue exchanges, long, unrehearsed takes, and an absolute minimum of plot structure and setting. Yet even Cassavettes did not employ verite techniques to capture "high drama," as did Milligan. There is something about the tragic melodramas of Milligan which seem perfect for being captured in this audience-engaging style, for it gives the overwrought, far-fetched scenarios a sheen of neo-realist authenticity, in effect making these lurid dramatics seem real and alive, as if the audience were watching documentary footage of these sad, tragic lives.

Alas, the legacy of the cinema verite tradition seems to be its appropriation, in cynical, highly manipulated form, by network television in its depiction of "real" people in "authentic" situations via the noxious genre known as "reality television," in which dumb saps run around attempting various competitive antics (almost all of which accent physical prowess or familiarity with current pop culture over intellectual abilities or creative talents) for cash and prizes. Long-running series such as Survivor (CBS) 2000-)and Big Brother (CBS) 2000-) prostitute the documentary spirit, if not the letter, of cinema verite in an attempt to pawn off highly-scripted, largely dubious "contests" as the chronicling of "real" events. Ironically, the

prototype for today's specious "reality television" was the exemplary American Family (1973), a daring public television series which recorded over 700 hours of footage of an "average" American family, boiling this raw material down to a dozen hours which chronicled the hectic, sometimes painful lives of the group, showing each participant at their best, and worst. American Family was a bonafide exercise in cinema verite which, in an eerie way, reinforced as truth some of the pessimistic melodramatic antics in the Milligan sexploitation films via its depiction of nasty behind-the-scenes squabbling within the "typical" American family. Sadly, cinema verite's current descendants are negligible, hypocritical shams which are so thoroughly manipulated, they amount to little more than hour-long infomercials depicting how corporate interests want citizens to envision contemporary American culture.

As for the tradition of cinema verite in cinema, it survives, barely, in a curious subgenre of narrative film known as the "filmed journal," in which a melodrama, often of a highly traumatic nature, is supposedly captured by one or more persons who just happened to have a home video recorder with them during the event. In this way, this genre harkens back more to the documentary tradition of cinema verite than to the few, failed experiments at "pure" narrative verite, but the results are still, while wildly uneven, often interesting. Three of the most successful of the "filmed journal" genre would be The Blair Witch Project (1999) d: Daniel Myrick, Eduardo Sanchez), which chronicles a supposed trip into the woods to find a witch of legend; Full Frontal (2002) d: Steven Soderbergh), which depicts via "random" footage the neuroses and lusts of several friends; and Cloverfield (2008) d: Matt Reeves), a surprisingly coherent and engaging melodrama which follows a group of friends as they attempt, unsuccessfully, to escape Manhattan during an attack by a (largely unseen) giant monster. The use of point-of-view drama, integral to the spirit of cinema verite, in which participants describe their invariably angst-ridden situation, primarily works well in these films, although the conceit of the "film within a film" is, if not a cheat, certainly a distancing of the melodrama through a "second" camera eye, which dilutes the impact of events even as it attempts to authenticate them. The prototype for this "filmed journal" brand of pseudo-cinema verite may well be A Hard Day's Night (1964) d: Richard Lester), a marvelous

fictional "day in the life" document of the immensely popular music group, the Beatles. A Hard Day's Night manages to capture, like bottled lightning, the awesome energy of the emerging youth culture, and contains some refreshingly raw and candid footage of "The Fab Four" as they traverse a society which simultaneously embraces and suffocates them. The film, although completely scripted, is as close to an authentic cinema verite experience as anything seen in commercial cinema at the time, and possibly one of the most successful uses of "narrative verite" ever.

Still, there seems to be precious little, if any, "pure" narrative verite being created today, that is, a scenario of high drama recorded primarily through an always-moving handheld camera, capturing a traumatic melodrama as if it were a documentary, but without the distancing cheat of "confessing" that events are being recorded by a third party. Perhaps Milligan knew a secret which others have only intuited; a Write melodrama of tragic lives unfolding, undiluted by stage affects or fourth-wall disclaimers, would be too traumatic, "too real" for the average audience member. The absence of the Milligan sexploitation canon thus poses another peculiar question; are they lost to the ages because they were too dark, too unrelenting, "too real" for our timorous, predictable and entirely counterfeit modern culture?

8

Seeds (1968)

Thanks to grindhouse film archivist Mike Vraney, Andy Milligan's Seeds of Sin - once considered lost and now the earliest Milligan feature known to survive - was located, remastered and released on home video. Although Seeds of Sin was conceived and released as a sexploitation film, and from what can be ascertained, shares much with Milligan's other sexploitation efforts, it may also be classified as a horror film, as it contains several key genre elements- including unseen killers and brutal murders- and in fact comes across largely as a template for The Ghastly Ones, considered Milligan's first full-fledged horror film.

Seeds of Sin's opening credits are interspersed with generic scenes of naked people engaging in sexual intercourse, images purportedly not shot by Milligan, and added later by the producers to "spice up" what is on its own not a terribly erotic film. These laborious sex inserts, which are also crudely inserted throughout the film in instances where characters are "feeling frisky," are a marginally successful attempt to make Milligan's melodrama look more like a "traditional" sexploitation film - as created by a heterosexual male filmmaker for a heterosexual male audience - in which snippets of perfunctory exposition are interrupted by long stretches of documentary-like sexual activity. The existing print of Seeds of Sin (henceforth referred to as Seeds, which was also Milligan's original title for the film) thus vividly illustrates the wide disparity between the aforementioned "traditional" sexploitation film of the day, and the assuredly peculiar, highly idiosyncratic melodramas of Andy Milligan, in which sex between men and women is treated peripherally if addressed at all, whereas the lust leading to it - and most importantly the punishments and tortures suffered after these grievous transgressions- are ruminated on at length. Milligan's melodrama, moreover, is filmed on dark, grainy 16mm film, largely via a wobbly hand-held camera, featuring tinny sound capturing the

wailing of the constantly overwrought actors. Compare this to the relatively staid sex inserts, which appear to have been shot in 35mm and are thus much more visually polished; they feature perfunctory sexual liaisons with attractive couples, conveying a "normal," pedestrian depiction of sex. These well-scrubbed, uninspired scenes look as if they could have been lifted intact from any number of sexploitation films of the day, including those of Doris Wishman, Joe Sarno or Lou Campa.

Yet when the final opening credit rolls-"Directed and Photographed by Andy Milligan"-followed by the first Milligan-shot footage, the switch is shocking, traumatic, even devastating, as the viewer enters a dark, loud and angry world, in stark contrast to the scenes which annotated the credits. The ensuing story, tensely written and acted with high theatricality, comes across as a strange cross between Greek tragedy and light opera, as bigger-than-life characters moan and wail and spit and curse and suffer all the horrors of an Old Testament hell while betraying each other at every possible turn. The high drama of Seeds relies on several qualities which occur with stunning regularity in Milligan films, and may be considered part of his stock theatrical paradigm: there is almost constant fighting between characters, an endemic antagonism of a frequency and energy not seen regularly in other film; characters, usually in cahoots with a partner, are invariably motivated by a plot which will destroy a perceived enemy and assure them political or economic gain; characters love to sabotage others with stark revelations of a traumatic kind; frequent emotional outbursts typify the average conversation; and emotionally overwrought characters often succumb to outbursts of violence, directed with equity towards self and others, but usually ending with a devastating impact on the whole group.

The film proper begins in the Manning dining room. Daughter Carol hides behind a large vase of roses as she springs the news on mother Claris-she has invited her siblings and their partners over for the Christmas holidays.' Carol's crouching behind the large bouquet illustrates her hiding behind the etiquette of social manners, pretending that inviting the children home for the holidays is a wonderful thing (as it may well be in any "normal" household), whereas the crafty daughter knows all too well how her misanthropic mother feels about the idea. In effect, the revelation is a

direct act of sabotage upon the head of the household, and Carol seeks refuge behind the blooms as might a child fearing physical punishment from an enraged elder upon sharing an untoward disclosure.

Thus are introduced Seeds' two main characters, for the unfolding scenario is essentially a battle for power between these two antithetical family members. Claris Manning, the malevolent Milligan matriarch, is played with bountiful angst and venom by Maggie Rogers. With her craggy face and gruff demeanor, she is probably as close as Milligan ever got to manifesting a conscious stand-in for his own despised biological mother. Carol, the only Manning child who still lives at home, is played by Milligan's real-life wife (for the moment) and designated sexploitation "starlet," Candy Hammond. The terribly goofy Hammond was Milligan's attempt to go straight, not in his personal life, but in his movies. Even the gay Milligan knew enough to get a "sexy young thing" to be featured front and center in his sexploitation efforts, and Hammond came to his rescue, becoming his sex symbol and, for a tragically short period, his real-life wife.' Yet Candy Hammond was virtually a street person, one of many Milligan "picked up" for his theatrical troupe. Her acting is so raw and unschooled and borderline amateur, she comes across as a virtual documentary character, unfocused and perhaps even mentally challenged-thus, even Milligan's token "sexy girl" is a twisted, broken, abnormal thing, a pathetic substitute for the sexploitation ideal, but capturing the real-life attributes of such a character quite well.

Claris reacts violently to this act of sabotage on Carol's part: "I don't want them in this house! I don't want them here! They're selfish and conniving, they're only waiting for me to die!" Claris thus is further identified as the prototypical Milligan mother, a woman who, for reasons to be revealed, despises her children, regrets their births, and makes no bones about expressing these sentiments. Claris angrily leaves the dining room table, and we can now see that she is confined to a wheelchair, a crude but effective metaphor for the incapacitating bequest of lifelong detestation. The mad matriarch has a noisy tantrum in which she declares, "They will destroy this house!" A man with a patch over one eye (Jesse Bigelow), who we assume is one of the servants, takes Carol aside and mutters, "She's right, you know-by

inviting them, you've destroyed this house!," a breach of etiquette which suggests that he may more than just a servant. Claris becomes so overwrought that she suffers a stroke or seizure, which renders her comatose.

Meanwhile, the servants, Jessica (Patricia Dillon as "Pauline Ramsey") and Peter (Jonathan East), skulk in their quarters, and plot against their employer. In response to horny Peter's suggestion of marriage, cold Jessica states, "We have a very good business arrangement - let's keep it that way." Their talk ofbetrayal and conspiracy ignites lust, and the two begin to fondle and undress each other. Jessica interrupts their sex play before consummation (coitus interuptus?) to get back to the business at hand, leaving Peter (and possibly the audience) frustrated and horny. Jessica is an archetypal Milligan female -cold and calculating - who cleverly uses sex as a weapon and a tool and is thus clearly the central power figure. To clarify this distinctly-drawn power dynamic, Peter moans, "Why does it always have to be your way?" Soon, Jessica acquiesces, in order to keep her partner-in-crime appeased, and in so doing underscores her complete domination of the relationship. The two undress in a tight two-shot which features a bunch of roses conspicuously positioned in the background - here, the evil blooms mock the dumb ideal of romantic beauty, which merely disguises the raw pain of true lust, the ripping claws of cold, merciless nature.

This scene stands as a good example of how Milligan filmed sex scenes, using a style in stark contrast to that of most of his peers. Milligan's sex scenes are dark, confusing, claustrophobic and tightly cropped, rendered very fluid by the use of the hand-held camera. It is a visceral, intimate style, which could even be said to be coming from the point of view of one of the participants. Milligan captures the act as a narratively-soaked point-ofview art study, involving the audience deeply and refusing the easy identification of the female body as static object. In comparison, most sexploitation-film sex scenes during this time period were filmed from a clearly defined distance, using an anchored camera, recording the sex act in almost clinical fashion, replicating the objective experience of the stage play, and engaging the (presumably male) audience in their favored role of detached voyeur,

linking male subject to female object via a fixed gaze, not unlike a hunter and his prey.

Soon, Dr. Kram (Paul Eden) and his nurse, Miss Bundy (Rita Benning), arrive to treat the ailing Claris. Running upstairs to Claris' bedchambers, the medico gives the old woman a blood transfusion, in another gloomy, entirely hand-held scene that is played like a horror scene, right down to the familiar Thomas J. Valentino library cue, "The Web," playing on the soundtrack. The scene ends with a closeup of a bottle filling with Claris' old blood, alluding to the vampiric, and painting Claris as an undead thing who uses the blood of youth to sustain unnatural life -as will be seen, this use of another being's "sacred fluid" (blood) semen, nutritional extract) to sustain a diabolical life will be a recurring Milligan theme.

Elsewhere, carefree Carol takes a bath, giving the grindhouse audience a glimpse of female nudity, a somewhat rare thing in a Milligan film. Afterwards, Carol masturbates while reading wrestling magazines, rubbing the pictures of bronzed muscle-men against her breasts. This scene is scored to corny, even comical library music -some might say even "gay" music - as Milligan here was playfully injecting some familiar gay iconography (muscle-man photography) into a scene which otherwise would make little sense, as a normal adult woman would likely find nothing less erotic than pictures of oiled-up, musclebound "pretty boys." Yet the scene also illustrates that Carol is definitely a spoiled brat, an adult child living at home, possibly retarded and certainly a case of arrested development.

Claris, recently resurrected from the dead, attempts a heart-to-heart talk with Carol. The scene reveals two important plot points, one being the first mention of seventeen-yearold Buster, clearly the apple of Claris' eye. More significantly, Claris asks Carol where she intends to put older brother Michael, and when Carol coyly states that Michael will be sleeping next door to her, Claris warns, "You're not going to start that up again? I'm warning you, Carol, let sleeping dogs lie!" The comment not only signals that Carol and Michael have something more than the traditional brother-sister relationship, but the allusion to "sleeping dogs" amusingly illustrates how Claris views her sexually compulsive offspring. Claris ends the

conversation on an ominous note: "I know everything that goes on - always-you oughta know that," revealing that Claris does in fact represent the omniscient goddess archetype of antiquity, the powerful, all-seeing matriarch who rules (and judges) her children with an iron fist.

What follows is a grim, harrowing nightmare of a scene which figures all but peripherally in the plot of the film, but expresses well pretty much everything about its major themes, and quite likely the philosophy of the filmmaker. It is arguably the coal-black heart of what is already a very dark film. Young Drew (David Hazard), apparently one of the Manning children but appearing only briefly anywhere else in the release version of Seeds, meets with Dr. Kram in his office. Drew pleads with the doctor to perform an emergency procedure as yet unnamed. Kram chastises Drew for "attempting something like that" himself, but Drew explains his reluctance to enlist the doctor, as his "reputation is not that great." Kram then sets an arbitrary price of $1,500, which Drew complains is an unattainable sum. Drew offers instead a purloined diamond necklace, which Kram grabs and examines up close, as might a greedy Times Square jeweler looking to sucker a yokel tourist with a low-ball appraisal of a rare heirloom - Kram even whistles as he assesses the charm's potential value. While Kram drools over the jewels, Drew makes a bargain with him for half the eventual proceeds, while in the background we hear the escalating sounds of a woman's screams. Nurse Bundy runs in and announces, "She's hemorrhaging again-we'd better hurry!"

All hell breaks loose as Drew retrieves a young woman, Bonita (Magie Dominic), apparently Drew's paramour, who is in a state of high hysterics, and carries her into the examining room. As Drew sets the shivering Bonita on the operating table, she holds onto him for dear life, terrified out of her mind, and screams, "Don't leave me! Tell me you love me! I can't face mother - what am I going to tell them?" As Kram prepares to begin the procedure, he yells callously at Drew, "Better hold her down, fool!" in preparation for what is surely to be a traumatic invasive procedure. At the sight of this sleazy stranger crudely spreading her legs, Bonita becomes even more unhinged, convulsing and screaming at the top of her lungs, and a distraught Drew finally calms her down in the only way he knows-by

punching her in the face. With the patient now comatose, Kram yanks poor Bonita's ankle up in the air and jams a large needle into her genitals, while the already-shaking camera, unable to bear any more of this spectacle, swivels around convulsively, ending the scene in a collage of visual disorientation.

Here, in a compelling, indelible nutshell, is everything that early Milligan cinema was capable of. A highly traumatic event is recorded via a quivering hand-held camera, chronicling it as if it were documentary footage of a real-life tragedy, creating an agonizingly neo-realist mise en scene.3 The sheer horror of the mammalian procreative process, which recklessly produces so many unwanted offspring by an artless act of dumb lust, is expressed succinctly in the scene, with neither parent wanting to own up to the repugnance of what they have created. Truly, how the "seeds" of insemination can lead to the "bad seeds" of neurotic, unwanted offspring unless the seedling is destroyed is cleverly depicted here. Bonita's entirely pathetic solicitations of Drew's love amidst these tragic settings underscore the complete uselessness of such romantic declarations, rendered mute and impotent in the real world of coldness and cruelty. Further, the scene exposes the entire sham of heterosexual courtship, which leads in so many cases to such an unhappy ending. As for the males, Drew is an atrocious little thug, whose act of violence against his supposed charge exemplifies Milligan's stated philosophy about woman, that they are cold, calculating creatures who must be shown who's boss- apparently socking them in the jaw is a preferred form of correction, as it seems to occur in many of the Milligan sexploitation films. Male violence towards women is a hallmark of the Milligan film universe, and it appears to be more than an exercising of his sado-masochistic leanings, but an emotionally-fueled venting of his lifelong misogyny. Furthermore, the male collective is often engaged in conspiracy against one or more women in Milligan films, illustrated well here by the collusion between Drew and Kram, not only in the forced medical crime performed on Bonita, but in the callous profiting from her stolen property, the jewel necklace. In short, Milligan's male characters often rob, torture and violate their women, and if the victims get too uppity in response, they beat them up. The whole Milligan universe is a horror of pain and violence and betrayal, and as witness this scene, the camera must eventually turn away

from the depiction of acts too terrible to be endured, let alone recorded. And as a final testament to Milligan's knack for effective storytelling, the viewer may realize that throughout the scene, not one word of overt explanation of the back-room abortion taking place was uttered, because the scene itself conveyed the reality of this nightmare all too clearly.

Meanwhile, back at the Manning residence, seventeen-year-old Buster (Gene Connelly) arrives at the house, all dressed up in a military cadet's uniform - apparently the young lad has been attending a private boarding school. When Carol asks how her youngest sibling spends his time, Buster announces coyly, "Reading is half my life!" leading the viewer to ponder what the other half is. The first person Buster asks about is older brother Michael, suggesting that the two have a past which needs to be addressed. On cue, the doorbell rings and Carol shoos Buster away, as she wants to greet Michael personally. As he departs, Buster snorts, "He always was your favorite, wasn't he?" Michael (Anthony Moscini under the pseudonym "Robert Service") enters, and Carol passionately hugs and kisses him as she would a lover, leaving little doubt as to the childhood history of this pair. When Michael suggests that they let his wife Susan in, Carol storms off angrily.

Later, the Manning family gathers around the dining room table, still adorned with the mammoth centerpiece of roses, a pathetic gesture of decorum which appears ludicrous amidst this assembly of human monsters. Claris soon wheels herself in and, upon seeing her adult children for the first time in many years, greets them thusly: "Siddown - ya look like a bunch of fools standing there!" The siblings and their paramours dutifully sit, as Claris continues her greeting: "I might as well make it clear here and now, I didn't invite any of you!" The salutations deteriorate further as Claris becomes sloppily drunk: "There's not anyone here I'd give two cents for!" Finally flush with the false confidence of alcohol, Claris lets them all have it: "It's not entirely your fault - I spoiled ya rotten! The Good Book says, `Ye shall reap and ye shall sow.' Well look at the lot of you -you're a bunch of bad seeds!," clarifying at least one meaning of the film's title.

Claris, as mentioned, is the archetypal Milligan matriarch - a mean, malicious misanthrope who has nothing but disdain for her children, and by extension all of mankind. There is also something almost demonic, supernatural, or superhuman about a character like Claris, for with her constant drinking and grim demeanor, she appears unearthly and in some manner one of the undead, a thing that should not have survived as long as it has. At one point, when the subject comes up of whether she could even outlive her children, Claris snorts, "Nature can be goosed in any direction you want - I know, I've been doin' it for years," which references the earlier blood transfusion, and perhaps other diabolical acts as yet unknown, which reinforces the uneasy notion that Claris may be in some wise omnipotent and indestructible, a common attribute pinned to a domineering parent figure by a frightened child, and making Claris virtually a horror character in the scenario.

Attempting to lighten the grim atmosphere, Margaret (Lucy Silvay as "Helena Velos") asks Buster how he likes military academy, and he replies that he may make a career of it, as he especially enjoys writing poetry. Father Matthew (Neil Flanagan), a priest, apparently a Manning sibling but never addressed as such, grabs Buster's arm and gushes that he would love to read Buster's writing, a conspicuously gay overture which causes Matthew's partner, Barbara (Susan Cassidy as "Lisa Hart"), to grimace.'

Meanwhile, as Margaret and Claris continue to bicker, the one-eyed servant Mortimer, who has been passing around the plates and helping Jessica and Peter serve dinner, causes a plate of food to fall on Margaret's lap, ruining her new dress. Margaret yells at the servant, who starts to talk back, but she responds, "Who the hell do you think you are?" to which Claris reveals, in a hilarious moment of high drama, "He's your father!" So Mortimer, this passive and submissive cipher who is treated as little more than "the help," is the titular head of the Mannings, a declawed patriarch, a somewhat astounding revelation which paints the archetypal Milligan father perfectly- so ineffectual, pushed so far into the background of the family dynamic, that he may be considered little more than paid labor.

Later, Michael's wife Susan (Eileen Hayes) goes to speak with Claris, as they barely know each other. Claris attempts to compliment the attractive young woman: "You're prettier than I thought you'd be! I thought he'd pick a wife who was plain, to show off his plumage!" Hurt by her accusation of Michael being a petty narcissist, Susan asks why she hates her eldest son, Claris reveals an important plot point, "I dislike them all. I spoiled them all, they had money for anything they wanted," revealing that the family was wellheeled, and that it was this unearned bounty which first corrupted them. Susan inquires about Michaels' father, to which Claris drops another bombshell: "Michael's father, my second husband, is in the home for the criminally insane!" Thus we have not one but two traumatic father revelations in the space of five minutes. Claris' first husband is a passive buffoon, and the second a dangerous lunatic. These gravely defective men literally implanted Claris with the "seeds" of cowardice, passivity, criminality and madness, all of which would surely find their way into the psyches of subsequent offspring, as witness this remarkably dysfunctional family.

"Father" Matthew's wife Barbara next visits Michael in his room, who is first seen preening himself in the mirror, reinforcing his mother's notion of him as a self-centered "pretty boy." The slatternly Barbara makes an aggressive pass at Michael, which he quickly accepts, revealing each to be morally corrupt, happy to be unfaithful to their spouses with nary a moment's thought. However, as the two begin foreplay, Michael thinks he senses someone directly outside his door, and pulls back from Barbara. After looking around, Michael mutters, "That's funny, there's nobody here," allowing the viewer to assume that either a sneaky voyeur has escaped detection, or that the "disturbance" outside was a psychologically triggered reaction to cruel betrayal and subsequent guilt, a Freudian phantom triggered by two haunted neurotics. What is clear, however, is the possibly significant fact that thus far, no couple in Seeds has actually been able to consummate the sex act, which is always interrupted by something or someone -coitus interuptus appears to be the name of the game in this household.

Yet dark forces do prowl the Manning estate, as Seeds turns from high drama to low horror. The rejected Barbara takes a bath while listening to a

radio which is conveniently perched on the edge of the tub. Suddenly, Claris' cane appears and knocks the radio into the bathwater, electrocuting the sinful wench. Moral justice has been served, but by parties as yet unknown, as Claris' disembodied walking cane is used, rather amusingly, as a most conspicuous "red herring," as its holder could have been anyone. Even the cane's horizontal entrance into the scene may remind the viewer of the long hooked poles which were used to extract failing performers from vaudeville stages, during Depression-era amateurnight extravaganzas, which in this case may paint the victim not just as a sinner, but a loser as well -and certainly, one could not dream of a more comical symbol of "dumb fate."

Soon, Susan returns from her informative conversation with Claris, and starts an argument with Michael - she knows that Barbara has been "cruising" Michael, and Michael all but admits it, taking great pains to be as mean as possible to Susan. Michael tosses Susan roughly on the bed and verbally attacks her: "Who the hell do you think you are? I do as I please, you know!" When Susan whines about Michael consorting with the trampish Barbara, Michael explodes: "You're talking about tramps? Have you taken a good look at yourself lately!" Michael picks Susan up roughly, and carries her over to the mantel mirror, forcing her to see herself as he sees her, a pathetic rag doll of no import, a tramp among tramps. Next, Michael calls Susan's bluff: "Did you tell my mother that you forced me to get married, by getting pregnant?" Pregnancy is invariably a bad thing in a Milligan film, for many reasons- here, for instance, utilized as a weapon against another's freedom, a tool of control. Susan becomes evermore hysterical as Michael continues his verbal assault: "I didn't want the kid, I didn't want you! Love is something beautiful, something inside, something you don't know anything about! To you, love is a four letter word!" Susan begs for mercy, insisting she can't stand any more of his blatant cruelty.

Seeing that Susan is finally weakening from his cruel assaults, Michael begins his final attack, by telling her the story of a young boy, who had an unusual relationship with his younger sister: "This brother and sister were very close, kind of abnormally close! They had a very strange kind of physical attraction to each other - in fact they used to have sex with each other!" As Susan shakes her head in an attempt to avoid the revelation which

surely follows, Michael goes in for the kill: "Every night they had sex with each other, until he was 21!" Michael flips over, forcing himself on top of Susan and thus dominating the conversation by effectively switching the power dynamic, which is underlined by his final revelation: the girl of whom he spoke was Carol, so Susan can only assume whom Michael meant as the brother, none other than himself. Susan screams hysterically, insisting it must be a lie, and becomes so distraught that she threatens to kill herself. Michael slaps her in the face and corrects her, insisting that she doesn't have the nerve to kill herself, in effect challenging her to prove him wrong. The highly traumatized Susan runs into the bathroom and grabs a knife, but she does lack the courage to take her own life spontaneously. It looks like failure is certain until help comes from the outside again, this time by a mysterious swinging of the bathroom door, which implants the well-poised knife deep into Susan's battered heart. Once again, a possibly supernatural outside force has "helped" a sinner seek deliv erance from this vile plain, and Michael's confession, which in itself probably did him some good psychologically, was used solely as a weapon to punish another.

Some time later, Claris and Mortimer discuss the killings, and Mortimer states that the police who came to investigate did not rule out murder. Claris agrees- she feels that the killings were murders- and she clarifies her position thusly: "Everybody in this house in capable of murder...." As well as restating her low opinion of everyone in the Manning household, the statement also underscores the truth that all human beings, given the right circumstances, are capable of killing. Claris continues: "This whole family is sick! The only reason they're here now is this!" as she holds up a one-hundred dollar bill. Claris sighs, "Everything in the world boils down to this!" Claris lights the money on fire, as much as a protest against the hegemony of money in capitalist culture as another insult to the fortune's rightful heirs. Mortimer is horrified, but Claris shouts, "Let it burn! It's a beautiful sight! If I knew that I would die tomorrow, I would burn it all, just to spite them!" Mother's hatred of her offspring knows no bounds, for she knows well that money is at least one root of all evil, as it allowed her spoiled neurotic offspring to prosper and torment her to this day.

Margaret and her lover Jonathan (Jerry Cortez) share a romantic moment, as Jonathan slaps his woman around and orders her to fetch his robe. "You like it rough, don't you?" Jonathan spits. "Yes, dammit, yes!" replies Margaret submissively. The conspicuous insertion of an absurdly obvious sado-masochistic relationship is one of Milligan's boldest signatures thus far. As Jonathan holds his arms around Margaret's neck, in an embrace which suggests hugging as well as strangling, Margaret tells of her history with Claris, who used to beat her constantly as a child, a family dynamic which probably went far towards creating the pathetic masochist which she is today. She also relates how Carol was always the favored one, and how she and her were enemies. Margaret, being the eldest, was forced to take the role of caretaker to her invalid mother. The brutal treatment by mother and siblings turned the tortured, suppressed Margaret into a sex addict, and she used Jonathan as her means of escaping the hell of familial responsibility. Margaret recalls the moment she first set eyes on her savior-lover, and exclaims breathlessly, "You were a beautiful animal! I knew from that first night that you had sadistic impulses!" Comic-book sadist Jonathan replies, "I love you so much I could kill you!" The two begin to have rough sex. Jonathan orders, "Open up, mama!" as he pounces on top of her. As the scene fades out Margaret, who appears to have reached climax, moans, "Now! Now!" The implication here seems to be that only sex ignited by sado-masochistic impulses has the likelihood of successful consummation, that ritual abuse by and towards one's partner is the fuel of true passion.

Buster next visits Claris in her room, and in a highly agitated state demands, "I want to know how much I am going to inherit when you die!" Claris blithely retorts, "I don't know-I haven't made a will." The distraught young lad goes into a veritable tantrum, tossing the bedsheets about, while Claris calmly sips from her ever-present flask. Finally, Claris states coyly, "What's the matter with you? You oughta see a psychiatrist -you're a very sick boy!" Buster screams at the top of his lungs, "I'm not a sick boy. The whole world is sick! It's a horrible world to live in!," a line that succinctly states the Milligan philosophy. Now in tears, Buster collapses on the bed and moans, "Why can't I have any peace?" Claris coldly replies, "You'll never have peace as long as your alive! Did you ever give me any peace?" Claris then regales Buster with a long list of his chronic indiscretions at various

private schools, each of which he was apparently expelled from for illicit activity. Among Buster's schooltime hobbies were blackmail, fire-setting, attempted drowning, thievery, as well as the expected "abnormal relations with another boy." In sum, it would appear that Buster has been tossed out of almost "every school on the East Coast" for an impressive array of sociopathic, and some borderline homicidal activities. Claris concludes her survey of Buster's misdeeds with the cruelest suggestion a mother could give her child: "Were you trying to kill yourself? You gotta try a little harder next time!" This encouragement from mother, this suggestion to kill himself, is too much for the deranged young man, and he storms out of the room. Buster runs screaming into the woods, and finally fulfills his mother's fondest wish, killing himself by cutting his wrists with broken glass. As he collapses to the ground, Buster yells, "For Carol & Michael!," an obscure reference which suggests that Buster knows these two siblings as the political royalty of the family, their diabolical consortium prevailing against all comers.

In the servant's quarters, Jessica and Peter revise their conspiracy plans, in lieu of all the deaths. Jessica now has cold feet, but Peter wants to go ahead as planned, even theorizing that the murders might throw suspicion off them. They decide that tonight will be the night, and they go over the plans once more, discussing the poison, the forged signature, and the fortune they intend to acquire. The two start to make out again, inflamed to lust by their evil thoughts. Peter, out of character, is the one this time who decides to forgo sex until later, being all-consumed with his thoughts of fortune ill-gained. The two begin to share a drink, but are called away by the servant bell. In their absence, an unseen figure poisons their drinks (nicely depicted in shadow), and when they return, having noted curiously that the buzzer ringing was a decoy, they imbibe their poison drinks and die, painfully.

The scene returns to Margaret and Jonathan having sex, presumably continued from before, and painting the pair as a couple of rather long-winded "animals." Post-coitus, Margaret meditates further on the Manning women, stating about Claris that "Nothing can kill a bitch like mama," reinforcing earlier notions of the pickled matriarch possessing a supernatural immortality. She then describes the accident which confined her mother to a wheelchair - she was pushed down the stairs by an unknown assailant.

Changing the subject to half-sister Carol, Margaret declares that she believes that she is the malevolent spirit which haunts this house: "No one knows Carol as well as I do. She's the destructive force, Jonathan - it's her." Margaret next retires to the bathroom, where an off-screen presence throws acid on her beautiful face, causing horrible burns and unbearable agony. Jonathan comes to investigate Margaret's screams, and is killed with a cleaver to the head.

Carol next visits Michael. In an overt attempt to seduce her brother, Carol flirts aggressively with Michael, who half-heartedly puts off her advances. But the petty narcissist is weak, after all, and Michael soon succumbs to his sister's familiar charms. They begin sexual foreplay in a scene which is easily the most erotic in Seeds, which tells much about Milligan's passion for this particular subject - according to the filmmaker, the film's working title was in fact Incest.' In Seeds and other Milligan films, sex is not mere recreation, as addressed in heterosexually-based sexploitation, but a grim compulsion which causes anguish for all. There is also an additional political component in the act, as in this case, where it is clear that Carol is trying to persuade Michael to acquiesce not only for animal satisfaction, but for the chance to add him as an ally against her mother. As the two are about to consummate this unspeakable act, Carol regresses further and further into infantile gibberish (which signifies how clearly madness is aligned with incest), and Michael has a last-minute change of heart, pushing Carol brusquely away. Carol becomes hysterical at this rejection, which probably mirrors similar rejections in the past, and appears to lapse into a psychotic state, running topless through the hallway and spouting nursery rhymes, in effect regressing to her infancy.6

Suddenly, Carol remembers Mother, the cause of all her anguish and most likely a sexual rival for Father's affections, and decides to finish what she had attempted so long ago. The rejected sinner, naked and alone, finally gains the courage to achieve the father's wish, and destroy the mother, in her eyes the real source of the family's dysfunction. The clearly deranged Carol calls, "Mama! Mama!" as she slowly stalks up the stairs, towards her mother's room. Claris, in a drunken stupor, mumbles "Carrie? Is that my Carrie?," words that seem almost tinged with affection, perhaps capturing

the churlish elder in a rare moment of empathy. Yet when the semi-naked Carol charges into the room and wheels her violently outside into the hallway, Claris finally realizes that Carol is indeed the demon which haunts this family, the "bad seed" that spoils the tree, the "destructive force" that cursed the Mannings. Horrified at the revelation, Claris screams, "It was you all the time!" as Carol pushes her mother, wheelchair and all, down the stairs- a setting which will recur frequently in Milligan films to symbolize the moral downfall of protagonists. After a horrific fall, Claris lies crumpled on the ground, finally conquered in death, as Carol laughs maniacally at the pathetic corpse of the fallen matriarch. Michael, the fallen mother's loyal son and agent, steps out of his room to see what all the commotion is about and, seeing his dear comrade lying dead on the floor, grabs Carol and strangles her to death, thus ending also Michael's curse of sibling lust. In addition, Michael was in all ways obliged to assassinate the sister, so that the fallen matriarchy ultimately wins, with the son allowed to carry on the sins of the father, whose partner in crime, the sinned daughter, is vanquished once and for all. The release version of Seeds of Sin ends here, in a rather abrupt cliffhanger finale, but the original ending goes much further, changes the plot considerably, and will be discussed below.

The Something Weird 2003 DVD release of Seeds offers, as a bonus feature, a 47minute workprint, containing deleted scenes as well as alternate takes of certain key scenes which appear in the release print, and entire sequences which play exactly as do similar sequences in the release version. One excised scene involves Neil Flanagan as clergyman Mathew (who as mentioned barely appears in the release print). In this remarkable scene, Mathew and Carol succumb to dumb lust, while Mathew moans pitifully, "I'm your brother - god forgive me!," revealing a profound plot point completely missing in the release version. The consummation of this incestuous act between brother and sister, which apparently the clergy can neither resist nor justify, tortures this purported "man of god" no end; he retires to his room, agonizing over this blasphemous act in which he has surely outraged his lord and master. Mathew soon decides that the only way to extinguish the torment of his unbearable sin is by ending it all, so he prepares to hang himself from his own tie. Alas, Mathew is a coward who lacks the courage of his convictions, so he sobs pitifully on the brink of the

abyss, unable to take the fateful leap. Fortuitously, "the cane of fate" which previously engineered the death of the wanton slut Barbara in her bath, enters again, literally pulling the chair out from under the sniveling Mathew, giving him his desired goal and relieving the world of yet another repellent also-ran. This scene is conveyed in a very few shots, a bravura performance by verite cameraman Milligan. Yet it is easy to see why the scene was cut - with its one-two punch of incest and fallen clergy, it is far too incendiary even for a jaded grindhouse audience, and the distributor might have even feared censorship problems.

As revelatory as the previous scene is, the most significant piece of footage in the workprint is the original ending, missing from the existing release print, and changing the entire scenario in crucial ways. After Carol pushes Mother Manning down the stairs, and Michael then strangles Carol in retaliation, the release print of Seeds ends on this inconclusive, if dramatically powerful moment, as mentioned. Yet in the workprint, far more occurs afterwards: Michael picks up and molests the freshly-dead corpse of his sister whilst babbling assorted nursery rhymes incoherently, succumbing as did his sister to the legacy of childhood madness. Finally, Mortimer calmly walks up the stairs and calls the police, for he can now finally achieve his fondest goal, to get rid of them all -baleful wife and demented children - in one fell swoop!

This dizzying sequence undermines the entire conclusion of the release print, which suggested the final victory of the Manning matriarchy, firstly through Claris' oppressive rule over the family and punctuated, even after Carol's assassination of the evil mother, by obedient son Michael's killing of Carol, the final act in a successful conspiracy between mother and son. Yet the original ending reveals that passive cipher of a patriarch being the true power behind the throne, as it were, diabolically orchestrating the downfall of the entire clan with clever, long-range and circuitous back-room machinations. This is patriarchal justice Milligan-style, depicting the eventual victory of an aggressive, punishmentbased Sadean conspiracy between father and daughter over the formidable, but ultimately passive and thus fallible Masochistic cabal between mother and son, which has at its core the fatal defect of the neurotic quest for punishment for perceived sins.

Additionally, what is called an unfinished trailer for Seeds is also included on the Something Weird Video release. This roughly five-minute film, lacking any voice-over or graphics, contains a few scenes missing from the release version. Most conspicuous is an entire subplot with Mathew and Barbara, in which the originally dominant Mathew is summarily tamed by his partner, forced to swallow her spittle and service her genitals orally. Following shortly is a similar scene in which Carol forces Mathew to service her genitals orally; it would appear that to a career misogynist such as Milligan, the forced sexual servicing of the female, especially via the mouth, is the ultimate degradation.

Seeds illustrates some of Milligan's trademark effects, which will occur with regularity in subsequent films and likely appear in the lost sexploitation films. The dark, grimy handheld cinematography illustrates the vast potential for the cinema verite technique to be used to capture (especially melodramatic) narrative scenarios, for it goes far to create the illusion that what the viewer is watching is some sort of infernal home movie taken by an unseen chronicler, the documentation of a family in turmoil, capturing their crimes and transgressions for posterity.' Also, the killings in Seeds are all portrayed in an absurd, almost comical manner, both in execution and documentation, leading one to speculate that Milligan saw his Seeds not primarily as low tragedy, but high comedy. Finally, some of the most powerful scenes involve a character shown in extreme close-up, who reveals dark secrets or antagonistic personal emotions directly at the camera, thus sharing these intimate moments with the audience. Milligan's training in theatricality is well served by this innate ability to signal clearly when the audience should "pay attention." In somewhat stark contrast, expositional points are usually handled via claustrophobic, briskly-paced two-shots, in which two characters unveil plot points as quickly as is humanly possible. The plot may be important to Milligan, but just as important is getting it out of the way expediently.

Seeds takes place in an uncanny, anachronistic netherworld. Although it is assumed to be contemporary in period, the utter lack of modern emblems or artifacts creates the illusion that the scenario could be unfolding today, or one hundred years ago. There is no establish ing shot of the Manning

residence, in fact no exterior scenes whatsoever but for the brief suicide of Buster in the woods, so Seeds could be taking place in downtown L.A. or some isolated province in Old Europe. The events take place during the Christmas season, as revealed by Carol at the film's outset, but no mention whatsoever of holiday festivities or Christian iconography, in fact no evidence whatever of a specific season is revealed, again placing the melodrama in a generic, ethereal setting which is highly theatrical and symbolic-it would appear that Milligan desired to make Seeds a universal parable of fallen man, applicable to any culture during any historical period. This refusal to place itself in a historical context is one of the film's enduring strengths, and reinforces Milligan's stated belief that filming a melodrama outside of the trappings of modern day had the potential to make the resultant work "timeless."8

As for the characters, the elder woman in Seeds is a weird (and in some wise beautiful) hag, a magnificent engine of destruction, the goddess-as-crone incarnate, bold and angry and vengeful. The young women are, contrary to pop-film archetype, not tortured virgins, but conniving, seasoned whores, and proud of it. These opportunistic, devious creatures who control and manipulate men with sex, are the daughters of Sade. They use other men to preserve the patriarchal order and crush a threatening matriarchy. The young men are duplicitous, mercenary characters, all beholden in some way to Mother Manning, whose only real weakness, fatal though it be, is an inability to control their sexual appetites, which of course makes them easy prey for the predatory young whores whom they invariably hook up with.

Gay men, as exemplified by Matthew and Buster, are drawn as compulsive, cowardly, highly neurotic creatures, pitiful beasts who easily turn to criminal activity in an effort to scratch a metaphysical itch which can never be sated. As seen first in Vapors, Milligan seems to have had at least an ambivalent, if not a downright negative, opinion of his homosexual peers. It says something about an artist who goes out of his way to bring to life characters which have heretofore been largely exiled from popular cinema, only to trash them mercilessly by painting them in a harsh, unflattering light. This may express a deep understanding of the gay psyche, a knee-jerk self-loathing, or an impressionistic portrait of personalities which Milligan knew

from real life, but in any case it expresses a most damning depiction of "the gay life" from one who surely knew.

Yet the oddest character in Seeds may be Mortimer, the passive, virtually mute male with a patch over one eye, an emblem which rather comically suggests both disability and duplicity. Mortimer's role in life appears to waiting on Claris hand and foot, and as he is dressed identically to Peter the butler, in a white linen jacket, the viewer cannot help but assume initially that poor Mortimer is just another servant. The startling later revelation that Mortimer is in fact, Claris' husband, and father of at least one of the children, is as traumatic as it is absurd, and this wimpy cipher of a patriarch well illustrates Milligan's disdain for passive ineffectual father figures, such as his own, who let evil women ruin children by refusing to interfere. Milligan's depiction of the hapless, toothless father figure may be even more devastatingly critical than that of the manipulative, powerful mother figure. The fact that there are two (or possibly more) "fathers," both long absent from the scene, and who have sired this disgruntled gang called family, only underscores that an overriding patriarchy which has abandoned its mate and abdicated its responsibility to nurture and protect its young is a trigger for ungodly actions which lead to the untimely demise of broken adult children. Significantly, the mother openly despises her children, whereas the father's voice is merely absent, and equally powerful for that fact. The result is a vacuum of self-loathing and low self-esteem which eats the children alive, and turns them into hopelessly insecure, neurotic, self-destructive adults.

Seeds was produced by the Bazzini family, who owned a Manhattan restaurant called The Grotto - the ever-playful Milligan once stated that the monstrous Mannings were modeled after their actual patrons, whom he described as "terrible" and "monsters."9 Milligan filmed Seeds entirely (but for the abortion, and outdoor suicide) at his current home at 7 Phelps Place in Staten Island, and brought the finished film in for under $13,000.10 The film was scripted by an uncredited John Borske, yet it conveys the very essence of the Milligan philosophy- it is a brutal, even vicious melodrama, containing far more soul, angst and neo-realistic trauma than any Warhol/Morrissey film (or similar art-house product of the day). Milligan's original title for the film, Seeds, has several overlapping meanings, all of

them mischievous and revealing. Surely the adult Manning children are, as Claris declares them, "bad seeds," a typical notation for family members who turned out less than ideally. As well, the notion of the heterosexual couple lusting after each other, succumbing to intercourse often in a hasty attempt to bolster a failing relationship, recklessly commits the seed of man to the vessel of woman, thus threatening to perpetuate through offspring the cruel anguish and fatal defects of human existence. Connecting the "sin" of procreation with the "sin" of desire is illustrated in Seeds by the repeated demonstration of the overlap, and to a shocking degree, synchronicity between sex and violence, that malefic stew of antipathy and desire which bubbles over into the agony of unquenchable lust, a curse which can never be sated, only scratched by endless, meaningless sexual intercourse or the ritual judgment of violent death. The "lesson" of Seeds becomes crystal clear by film's end-the "seeds" of sin are lust, greed and hatred - and thus the human race was born.

9

The Ghastly Ones (1968)

The Ghastly Ones is Andy Milligan's first color film, as well as his first all-out horror effort, although it shares a great deal with the previously-discussed Seeds of Sin- in each, an ill-fated family reunion leads first to acrimony among participants, and then to murder, as an unknown killer picks off family members, subjecting each to excruciating, fetishflavored deaths. The Ghastly Ones (henceforth referred to as Ghastly) was Milligan's first venture into a genre known alternately as the gore film, the splatter film or the "extreme horror" film, usually low-budget productions which boasted an abundance of gruesome on-screen murders depicted in graphic detail. Although the genre was born circa 1963 with Herschell Gordon Lewis' groundbreaking anti-female holocaust, Blood Feast, it wasn't until 1968, with films like George Romero and John Russo's Night of the Living Dead and Eddie Romero and Gerrado DeLeon's Brides of Blood, that the gore-horror film really entered the mainstream, and Ghastly thus reached an audience far larger than that for Milligan's sexploitation films, which were primarily limited to the grindhouse ghetto. Ghastly became a drive-in and urban grindhouse horror favorite for decades, showing up on the bottom of triple-bill drive-in horror-thons well into the 1980s.

The budget for Ghastly came in at $13,000, a large sum for Milligan during this period, but understandable when considering it involved his first use of color stock.' Sadly, the filmmaker received little of the eventual box office bounty from this successful low-rent horror tale, as the distributor turned out to be a dishonest charlatan. The partners at JER Films, with whom Milligan originally contracted Ghastly's production, subsequently defaulted to one Jerry Balsam, to whom JER owed a considerable debt. Balsam appropriated all of JER's inventory, including Ghastly, and proceeded to make a tidy sum on this catalog of "free" film properties. Balsam ended up releasing Ghastly on a popular drive-in double bill with

Headless Eyes (1971, d: Kent Bateman), a program which went on to make a good deal of money.' According to Milligan, when he finally confronted Balsam years later, the distributor confirmed that legally he owned Ghastly and owed Milligan nothing. Perhaps out of guilt or pity, Balsam offered Milligan the paltry sum of $3,000 in a feeble attempt to make things right, which the desperate filmmaker reluctantly accepted. Ghastly subsequently fell into the public domain, surfacing occasionally via increasingly tattered 35mm prints and several cheap videotape versions, until Something Weird Video got hold of a relatively intact print and digitally restored it, bringing out much of the film's original verve and color.

Ghastly stands as one of Milligan's grandest and most successful extant works, applying much of the high theatricality and verite energy of his sexploitation films to the largely woebegone narrative template which first made its cinema appearance in The Old Dark House (1932, d: James Whale), in which people gather at a spooky, isolated locale, and are subjected to harassment and murder in an attempt to eliminate all rivals to a fortune.3 Ghastly injects life into this tired workhorse via a bright script (co-written by Milligan and Hal Sherwood) which ruminates at length on the trials and vicissitudes of the modern heterosexual couple, shining a harsh light on their morals and prejudices. By the film's end, it will be seen that Ghastly comes across as one gay filmmaker's rather brutal, ritual extermination of the heterosexual social construct, which is portrayed as initially silly, overall indefensible, and ultimately diabolical in its capacity to bring more unwanted suffering creatures into a world of sheer horror.

Ghastly opens with a memorable prologue which features all but peripherally in the subsequent scenario, and in fact makes little sense from a strictly expositional point of view. The use in cinema of a pre-credits prologue or "teaser," a scene which may or may not be germane to the storyline, serves a more important structural function of introducing both an aesthetic style and the main theme(s) which will be expanded in the film proper - as well as getting the audience's attention. The prologue in Ghastly is a good example of this technique, as it sets the tone of the film as one of sudden violence, and most significantly, sets up the main theme of Ghastly, which is the ritual destruction of the heterosexual paradigm.

As the film opens, a conspicuously silly man and woman frolic in a wooded area. They are first seen running carelessly across a field, as the man carries an immense, garishlycolored sun umbrella. The absurd size and decoration of this most bizarre prop well symbolizes the utter vanity of this couple, whom we presume to be lovers, as they prance about, oblivious to the world around them, absorbed in their own collective ego. Like the umbrella, their love is ostentatious, grotesque, even obscene, and also like the precarious prop, their love is terribly fragile, thus vulnerable to negative outside forces. The couple sit to rest, and the woman, Ada (Ada McAllister), queries where they are. Her mate, Robert (Robert Adsit), gushes, "On a private island!" This revelation has import, for the implication is that they are trespassing, and should not be there. It might appear that this scene was designed to replicate the biblical tale of Adam and Eve, whose sojourn to the Garden of Eden, first begun as a carefree romp through Paradise, soon turned into a veritable hell of pain and punishment, thanks to the introduction of the forces of world evil - even the fact that the actors are "playing themselves," as witness using their real names as character names, tends to make the couple archetypal.

Robert plucks a homely weed for his love, which mirrors the utter banality of this relationship, how it may produce only unwanted, ugly things. Robert suddenly decides he wants to "look around" the surrounding area, leaving his worried lover all alone, in effect, abandoning her to her fate. Robert rushes around, flapping his arms, and looking very "gay." This may have been merely coincidental, as Milligan was prone to picking fellow homosexuals for his male characters, yet the effect is striking, for it paints Robert not only as a "pansy," a weakling among men, surely unable (and perhaps even undeserving) of the rigors of heterosexual love - it also raises the serious question of whether Robert's sudden desire to abandon his mate and explore the outside world is meant as metaphor for the trapped, repressed male who seeks to escape the bonds of heterosexual love and "explore" that which he really desires- sex with other men. In any case, what follows certainly reinforces the notion that both man and woman have "trespassed" some portentous moral territory, and must be punished. From out of nowhere, a male leaps on Robert and attacks him viciously. The attacker first mutilates Robert's eye, effectively removing his fatal desire to

"look around," a most gruesome punishment for untoward curiosity. The attacker then knifes Robert repeatedly, in what may metaphorically be seen as violent homosexual rape, thus satisfying Robert's morbid desire to see how the other half lives (and dies).

Poor Ada soon ventures forth to see what befell her beloved, and for her curiosity has her hand dismembered, followed by a cruel disembowelment. The dissection of the hand is significant, as it is the same hand which had accepted Robert's pathetic gift of love - the weed -and in so doing bonded the two of them together in their malevolent conspiracy of lust -with the hand removed, that bond is irrevocably broken. Further, the violent removal of the woman's vital organs acts as a symbolic dismantling of her reproductive capacity, her ability to create offspring, seen in the Milligan universe as perhaps the most heinous of all the many crimes of heterosexuality. Further, the killings are filmed in deep shadow, lending a stark contrast to this most problematic Garden of Eden, where the serpent waits not only to trip up man, but to annihilate him. When the main title next appears, one wonders whether "The Ghastly Ones" refers to the brooding killers, or to the murdered couple, and as the film unspools, the answer becomes stunningly clear, as Ghastly will prove itself to be a brutal campaign against the heterosexual world, in essence a diatribe against Adam and Eve.

Saturday morning finds Victoria (Anne Linden) and Richard (Fib LaBlanque) lounging in bed in their home in Philadelphia. After some harmless sexplay, the stunning redhead opens a letter she has received from a lawyer named Dobbs, whom Richard identifies as "Hubert Humphrey Dobbs," the esteemed elder counsel whose textbooks Richard read while in law school. Dobbs is thus introduced as the agent of patriarchy in toto, and the letter, which summons Veronica to a reading of her late father's will, sets the scenario as a patriarchal plot, the father against his adult children. The meeting is to take place in New York City on February 2, shortly after Christmas, in effect occurring shortly after the Yuletide tragedy of Seeds of Sin, and carrying on much of the same agenda. Richard confesses that his own law practice has been, thus far, unsuccessful, revealing him to be a

failed successor to the patriarchal throne, and thus likely targeted for correction or extinction.

Richard decrees that they do not have the funds to make the trip, but Victoria suggests that they enlist the aid of Richard's brother, Walter. Richard dismisses the idea vehemently, but Victoria insists that the sibling will be happy to assist, for "Walter's very sweet!" Richard rolls his eyes and intones, "You don't know how sweet he is!," a comment which hints that Walter may, in fact, be homosexual. This notion is given further credence by Richard's next admonition -"Do you know how many strings Walter attaches to his money? You don't know what you are asking me to do!"- suggesting that the meeting of the two estranged brothers would open up a can of worms which Richard would prefer remain sealed. Richard insists, "No! No! No!" to Victoria's pleas, and the scene cuts to Walter's apartment, where Richard mutters obediently, "Yes! Yes!" This is a marginally-successful attempt to use a dialogue-centric editing juxtaposition, in which a scene ending with one statement is "answered" by the opening dialogue in the following scene, a fairly common structural trick in 1960s cinema. Further, Richard's compulsive rejection of the idea of meeting his brother implies that he may have had untoward incestuous longings, or relations, with Walter, and is disinclined to revisit that dark period of his youth. When Richard then humbly mumbles in the affirmative in the presence of his brother, he is, in effect, resigning himself to the problematic opening of the gay incest door he so assiduously tried to keep bolted.

Dear brother Walter (Hal Sherwood, also the co-scenarist) is a conspicuously gay male, one of the most aggressively homosexual characters in all extant Milligan cinema, and may be observed as a good example of how the filmmaker (and his screenwriting partner) viewed the urban 1960s gay experience. Walter is a dandy, a fop, and a fussbudget, full of thinly veiled venom towards his recalcitrant brother, and utter loathing for the woman his brother married. Walter is a catty, superficial and highly manipulative person, not at all sympathetic, and might even be seen as one of the lesser villains of the piece. Again, Milligan's representation of his own socio-sexual orientation is problematic, highly critical, perhaps even downright condemnatory. Walter is dressed in one of Milligan's thrown-

together assemblages, oddly adorned in a gaudy red silk robe, topped with a stiff white collar, making him look like some errant clergyman.

In exchange for money reluctantly requested by Richard, Walter immediately unwinds the "strings" which he does apparently attach to his money: the couple is to look up an old friend, pick up a 36-piece set of Bavarian crystal from Tiffany's, and obtain the purchase price of a painting, "a Beardsley, `The Priest and the Acolyte,'" from an art gallery. This reference to a purported painting is, in fact, some clever gay-centric coding on the part of the screenwriters, which conflates two actual cultural artifacts into one quasi-fictional allusion. "Beardsley" likely refers to Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), an illustrator who became infamous during his tragically short life for his grotesque and explicit sexual scenes, many of which depicted same-sex couplings. (Speculations about the eccentric Beardsley's mysterious sexuality include the distinct possibility that he consorted with his sister, a fact which Milligan would have no doubt also celebrated.) The Priest and the Acolyte is an 1894 short story attributed to one John Francis Bluxam, and which concerned a "fallen" priest who has sexual relations with an altar boy. Walter's curiously "priest-like" outfit may now make sense, as he may well have fancied himself some sort of "gay clergy," a reigning erotic overlord to unappreciative underlings such as his recalcitrant brother. The title of the story also suggests the dynamic of elder seducer/younger victim, which again potentially mirrors the Walter/Richard relationship. The inflammatory 1894 tale, as well as Beardsley's nearpornographic artworks, were both considered scandalous, and were embraced as part of a burgeoning Aesthetic movement, which included in its ranks the famed author Oscar Wilde, and had a definably homosexual agenda. Here, Ghastly brings an undercurrent of true history, referring to the late-Victorian homophile community. Unfortunately, thanks to Milligan's propensity to have actors dash off important expositional (and other) points in a careless manner, and captured via his notoriously bad sound recording, references such as these are lost to all but the most astute viewer. However, these coded nuggets of textual gold are still available, to be appreciated by anyone who cares to pay close attention.

As Walter lists these ostentatiously burdensome "requests," which will surely weigh the young couple down and make their journey anything but pleasant, he compulsively picks lint off Richard's jacket, sneaking an opportunity to touch his dearly-missed brother/ lover, while simultaneously reminding the younger sibling that this priest-like elder still holds considerable sway over him. Walter then turns to Victoria, with another venomous broadside: "When you married Richard, I didn't think you were good enough for him. I'm sure in time you'll prove me wrong, my dear!" Walter then brusquely tweaks the woman's chin, an action which although ostensibly intended as a gesture of affection, may also be seen as slightly threatening or invasive, well expressing the possessive male's anger over this woman's "theft" of his promising young "acolyte"- as well as illustrating his undisguised loathing for the female of the species.

Walter next shoos Victoria off on a fool's errand to fetch some champagne, in order to get Richard alone. After she departs, Walter whispers, "You don't know how much I've missed you," which Richard finds an uncomfortable reminder of earlier activities. Walter continues, in an almost accusatory way: "You know, you took a big chunk out of my life when you married her." Here, Walter implies that, as blood relative, Richard owes him more fidelity than to his loved one. This is a common Milligan trope, wherein a biological family, dysfunctional as it may be, demands unswerving loyalty against all outside interlopers, which creates an ongoing conflict of interest for many a protagonist. Yet Richard stands firm, telling Walter, "You have abnormal taste," an observation which declares Richard's revulsion towards homosexual activity, but which may also refer, somewhat amusingly, to an unwanted memory on the young man's part as to the "taste" of Walter's cock, a taste he has now forsworn for that of female genitals.

During this exchange, Walter's face is half-hidden by Richard's, which is also partially obscured by the deep shadow of the stark lighting - reflecting two faces of man, normal and deviant. Further, the scene takes place in a dark room, covered in thick drapes, awash in shadows and by inference full of abominable secrets and shameful mysteries- the lair of a demon. Richard maintains his composure, stating: "Listen, Walter-ever since that Saturday afternoon, things have been different." Clearly, Richard had one (or more)

moments of weakness, and has since disavowed any of his potentially homosexual leanings, in a valiant attempt to be "normal" with a woman. Yet Walter protests, "Not for me!," implying that the older sibling not only still harbors erotic feelings for his kid brother, but would be more than happy to sabotage Richard's heterosexual happiness, were that possibility to present itself. Victoria now bursts into the scene, forcing two glasses between the men, emotionally separating them and rescuing her beloved from the potentially disastrous influence of his "abnormal" brother (perhaps also rescuing her own precarious relationship with her beloved). Once again, a weak, sin-laden man is brought back from the brink of unbearable homosexual self-loathing by a manipulative, possessive but well-meaning female, a recurring theme in Milligan's films, a most problematic template in that it is unclear just who is saving who from what. Yet Victoria is clearly shown in this scene as a savior of possibly supernatural import, via her final rescue of Richard from the clutches of his "evil" homosexual brother, but also via a shot mid-scene where the young woman stands under a brightly burning candle, a symbol of female empowerment and solidarity - perhaps even romantic allegiance - which will become a recurring motif in Ghastly and other Milligan films. As well, this flickering ember foreshadows the cataclysmic fire which destroys the diabolical family, yet ironically frees two of its female prisoners, allowing them finally to escape the punitive bonds of heterosexuality in order to forge something new and radically different, a movement as yet without a face or name.

Elsewhere, Donald (Richard Romanus) mimics everything his partner Elizabeth (Carol Vogel) says regarding the lawyer letter she has received, suggesting that he has no mind of his own. And finally, Veronica (Eileen Hayes) and William (Don Williams) discuss the upcoming family reunion. After some banal conversation, the two have sex, which the audience is spared thanks to a fortuitous fade-out. Post-coitus, the camera lingers over their bodies, in a rare moment of idyllic splendor for the haunted heterosexuals of Andy Milligan. Inquiring about the time, Veronica realizes that she is going to be late for the fateful meeting with sisters Victoria and Elizabeth, and proceeds to fuss over all manner of trivial things, such as costuming, hair, etc., in a simplistic sketch of the vanity of womanhood, as understood by the cynical or misogynist male. These three scenes, designed

to introduce the sisters who are central to the plot, all have a redundant, generic quality which intimate that all heterosexual couples are predictable, unoriginal and ultimately interchangeable.

At a tiny bistro on Broadway and 23rd Street, Veronica and Victoria get reacquainted. Veronica mutters, "I miss you dreadfully," as she leans towards Victoria, while a candle looms prominently in the foreground -again, a burning flame may suggest female solidarity, love between siblings, perhaps even unrequited romantic feelings. Veronica excitedly tells Victoria of her plans to go see a play called "Little Old New York," and to take in a fine repast at the famed Delmonico's Restaurant, as Elizabeth enters and joins her sisters. Woman's supposed vanity is again illustrated in this scene by the sisters' outrageous garb (designed by Milligan), which tends towards garish dresses and ostentatious headgear. Yet they all look "of a piece" in their curiously color-coordinated fashions. Also, the sisters tend to refer to each other via nicknames, a tradition likely forged in childhood- Vicki, Ronnie, Liz - which further suggests a familial, if not other, solidarity. There is a strong sense of female bonding in this scene.

As regards the purpose of this momentous meeting, Victoria clarifies some essential plot points thusly: "After momma died, the arrangement was that the will was not to be read until all three of us were happily married and settled." Thus this family's specific history mirrors society's strict reinforcement of the heterosexual social contract, by which patriarchy may sustain itself through economically and culturally advantageous couplings which contain the probability of producing more citizens, thus perpetuating the patriarchal paradigm in perpetuity. The audience also learns that Victoria has been married for seven years, Elizabeth for five, and kid sister Veronica for three. As the three discuss the eventuality of finally settling their father's mysterious estate, a flickering candle looms ever larger in the foreground - does it now symbolize the light of unquenchable female solidarity, or the dangerous flame of unwanted phallic intrusion? As if to answer, Elizabeth spills something on her lap, and as she cleans it, she apologizes, saying, "It's all right -I just didn't expect it so soon." Victoria queries, "Expect what?," which receives no answer - it seems that Elizabeth has a psychic foreboding

regarding the events which are about to transpire, and regarded the faux pas of etiquette as an omen.

At Lawyer Dobbs' dark and dingy offices, the reading of the will commences. Dobbs (Neil Flanagan) is a surreal character, a doddering old fool with a scraggly face and dressed like a skid-row bum, a most comical portraiture of the duplicitous Victorian attorney - absurd, perhaps pathetic, but still wielding considerable power over the community. According to Dobbs, Walter Crenshaw was a "very strong-willed and mysterious man," who boasted vast holdings in South America - i.e., an imperialist exploiter of the Third World, representative of British Colonialism. Crenshaw was also the classic Milligan "father in absentia," as he visited his biological family in the U.S. only five times, three of those which resulted in the three daughters.

Crenshaw speaks through Dobbs: "By now, you are all happily married. You loved your mother - I never did. She was a good mother, but a bad wife. She was possessive, selfish, and ... frigid." Dobbs continues: "Each of you shall reside in the Crenshaw House in sexual harmony for three days. This house must know married love in those three days, a love that it never knew from your mother and I." The main theme of Ghastly is thus revealed: entrenched patriarchy has lost faith in the victory of heterosexual relations (married love), and challenges its offspring to prove it wrong. A marvelous close-up of Dobbs at this point, revealing every crevice of his pock-marked face, and ghastly hairs and mucus bursting forth from his bulbous nose, suggests that if Dobbs does represent patriarchy, the system appears to be near death, its demise imminent. As the group leaves the office, Dobbs mentions in passing the servants who run the Crenshaw estate: "Martha, Abbey, and Colin Trask." As he speaks, Dobbs turns towards the camera in extreme close-up, opening his eyes widely as he mentions this last name, signaling to the audience that this "Colin Trask" is of momentous future import.

The next morning, everyone has arrived on Crenshaw Island, and they are greeted by the servants: Martha (Veronica Radburn), Hattie (Maggie Rogers) and the apparently infamous Colin Trask (Hal Borske). Martha and Hattie come across as slightly daffy nanny types, not appearing particularly

menacing at first, but Colin Trask is a buck-toothed, hunchbacked mongrel, perceivably retarded and potentially violent. The gathered are worried by Colin' manic behavior, causing Martha to reassure them dismissively: "Don't mind Colin Trask - he's simpleminded." On cue, Colin throws a tantrum for being told to perform the humiliatingly servile function of carrying the guests' luggage. The poor unfortunate screams, "I want my teddy! I want my teddy!" Martha turns suddenly vicious, screaming at him, "You be good or I'll get the belt!" Martha and Colin are thus framed as a surrogate mother and child - as corporal punishment for disobedient children is standard policy in the Milligan universe. As well, Colin - the infantile, physically crippled man-child - stands as one of Milligan's most indelible recurring archetypes, well representing the "children" of mankind, made vicious and pathetic by procreative taint (including inbreeding), and systemic physical and mental abuse by their guardians (including sadistic ritual punishment).

Finding the luggage conveyance too difficult to pull, Colin bursts into another tantrum, and is whipped into submission by Martha as the others look on, horrified. Victoria pleads with Martha, "Don't hit him! Can't you see he doesn't understand?" One of the males, probably Vicki's husband, replies something to the effect of "Leave them alone with their customs-they have their own way!," a most telling observation. Martha whips Colin ever more furiously, clearly gaining sadistic (and perhaps erotic) gratification in doing so. Afterwards, Colin reacts to his "lesson" by grabbing a nearby bunny rabbit and orally ripping out its intestines, savoring the small victory of tasting the warm blood which drips from a living being more vulnerable than he. Thus is illustrated in stark, if simplistic allegory, how the corporal abuse of a child often leads the victim to practice similar abuse on those smaller and weaker than he, carrying a familial sado-masochistic power dynamic into the community at large. This illustration of the predatory nature of man is nicely capped by Martha, who walks up to Colin, removes the furry victim, and motions for Colin to remain quiet, to keep this dark secret of familial dysfunction from the others, who themselves will learn it all too soon.

At the house, Martha shows the guests to their rooms. One of the males spots an immense, ugly stuffed animal in one of the rooms, which Martha

grabs quickly, saying, "It belongs to Colin!" She takes the giant gray teddy bear and cradles it in her arms as if it were a human baby, creeping down the halls and calling for its "father"- Colin. Martha, Colin and the homely plush "baby" are thus set up as an ersatz family unit. Perhaps Colin is not Martha's fellow servant or co-worker at all, but a blood relation of some sort - offspring, brother, mate-bearing some morbid, and likely erotic relation to the clearly deranged, designated "matriarch" of the household.

Later, the three happily married couples gather in the living room to become reac- quainted, exchanging in dialogue which nicely captures the vapid banter and silly affectations of the petite bourgeois. Victoria seeks Richard in the parlor, where he reads an old text in front of a roaring fireplace. Reminiscing about their first meeting, Richard ponders, "I think you laid a trap for me," to which Victoria replies, "I always get what I want," underscoring the Milligan female's less-than-innocent role in human relations. The two passionately embrace, and become sexually aroused. Richard mumbles, "You're bold," to which Victoria breathlessly whispers, "You taught me to be," clarifying this couple as yet another in a seemingly endless parade of sado-masochistic relationships in the Milligan universe. Perhaps the overriding point is that all emotionally-based, sexually-charged relationships are by definition sado-masochistic, as one partner invariably wields consensual mastery over the other. The two horny brutes begin to undress in preparation for sex when kid sister Veronica interrupts- so often in the Milligan universe, lust leading to intercourse is sabotaged by outside influences.

The Agony of Love: Anne Linden and Fib LaBlanque are simultaneously enticed and repulsed by the exquisite agonies of lust in Andy Milligan's rabid deconstruction of the myth of heterosexual happiness, The Ghastly Ones (1968).

Later that evening, the guests ascend the stairs- a Milligan setting which invariably stands in for moral ascent/descent. Suddenly, Victoria announces, "Don't get too cheekyremember, you are all guests in my house." The eldest sibling has pulled rank and committed an egregious faux pas, punctuated by a dramatic rise in music, as the others turn and look at her sternly. Victoria retreats, mumbling, "I mean our house," but her mercenary agenda has been bared for all. Meanwhile, in Veronica's bedroom, the horrible, half-eaten rabbit which Colin had so cruelly digested lies in a bloody lump on the bed. Next to it is a note, which reads, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit." In the Milligan universe, "the meek" are usually those individuals crafty and self-controlled enough to plot long-range conspiracy behind the scenes, waiting sometimes for decades to achieve their desired goals.

As Victoria and Richard discuss the situation from the safety of their own room, Victoria describes a sense of distance, an alienation from her sisters that she never felt before. As she speaks, Victoria fondles the wallpaper, as if she knows that it is the house itself (and certainly its creator) which sponsors the evil deeds that threaten to devour them all. When Richard assures Victoria that she will get her fair share of the Crenshaw fortune, she declares, "I want more than my share!" She explains that she took care of her sisters when she was younger, and feels she deserves the lion's share of the proceeds from father's estate, a story quite similar to Margaret's in Seeds of Sin. This confession of greed and entitlement conveys a fatal inherent flaw in the modern family, as seen by observers such as Milligan. Although designed theoretically as a communal affair, with all members ideally working in harmony towards the mutual goal of happiness and bounty for all, in reality the family unit is merely a inchoate collection of self-interested individuals, each with their own flaws, lusts and egos and each, ultimately, trying to overpower or sabotage the other for personal gain.

Victoria, as the eldest, considers herself entitled to ascend to the head of the household - in effect, she wants to be "Queen" of the Crenshaws. Thus, this "Queen Victoria's" designs on her empire may mirror that of the historical Queen Victoria, whose repressive regime was occurring simultaneously with events unfolding on Crenshaw Island circa 1896, and perhaps inviting the notion of Ghastly as being a microcosmic allegory of the reign of that infamous monarch. "Queen" Victoria further rants, "I want what's coming to me!," a delicious bon mot which can be interpreted in many ways. Her distraught husband whines, "I've never seen you like this!" to which the maligned queen intones menacingly, "Then you don't know me very well!" The face behind the benign mask of beauty is again bared, revealing the greedy, manipulative, low treachery which resides in the breast of the female heterosexual, according to Milligan.

As ever, these confessions of greed and monomania ignites lust in both partners, and they begin to make love. Yet directly outside the safety of their bedroom, shadows lurk and doorknobs turn - the dark forces which always stalk the heterosexual couple in Milligan's films-waiting once again to stalk and pounce. A knocking at the door, a blood stain on the floor, a bloody "X"

scribbled on the door, and another couple is sabotaged by coitus interuptus, emanating not from within but from without, as the occlusive forces which prowl the Milligan universe do their best to assure that heterosexual relations are never consummated.

Later, Richard and Donald go downstairs to investigate these dark forces which consistently thwart their efforts to boff their wives. Prowling through an inky blackness, Donald falls ill from a poisoned drink, and Richard stumbles onto the killer, exclaiming, "It's You!"- does Richard recognize the serpent, the devil, as the dark being which hounds his Garden of Eden? Victoria, hearing a noise outside, grabs a candle and walks down the stairs. At the base of the stairs, hangs a dead man - it is her beloved, Richard. Richard has seen the face of that which has vowed to destroy the heterosexual social construct, and was killed for this knowledge.

The next morning, Martha and Hattie fret in the kitchen about the manners of their current houseguests. Discussing the latest acts of domestic terrorism, which are still being attributed to Colin, Hattie declares: "We should have had him committed years ago!" But Martha counters, "But Hattie, you can't have your own brother committed to an asylum!" Thus is another of Milligan's wonderfully soap-operatic revelations of malefic blood ties, a la Seeds of Sin, Torture Dungeon, and so many other Milligan melodramas, which seem to have as their undergirding theme the notion that everyone is somehow related, due to the reckless, indiscriminate breeding patterns of the monster called man. Hattie continues, "If only he didn't get so violent," and Martha muses, "It's my fault. Perhaps if I didn't beat him so much...," a hilarious parody of what is, chillingly, likely a frequent real-life conversation between mothers and fathers about ritually-abused offspring. As a final cap to this gruesomely amusing mock-family conversation, Colin's two "caretakers" acknowledge that it is unfortunate that he must be chained up at night, like a lowly cur.

Elsewhere, Veronica is highly traumatized by her brother-in-law's horrible murder, and her husband tries to calm her down in true Milligan fashion - by beating and attempting to rape her. This harrowing scene is captured by a chaotic hand-held camera, which swerves away as poor

Ronnie is finally overpowered. In the films of Andy Milligan, trauma and despair on the woman's part, seem invariably to ignite lust and violence on the part of the male, implying that the men may only achieve full sexual release via the ongoing suffering of women, a truly "Christian" notion which Milligan addresses again and again.

Martha then summons Donald to help Colin chop wood downstairs, effectively setting him up for extermination. While he is sawing away, Donald is accosted by a hooded figure, who binds and gags him, and then stabs and disembowels him. As a final touch, the masked killer saws the body in half. Donald's murder is pure sadist ritual, well in keeping with the spirit of Crenshaw House, which seems increasingly to be haunted by the deceased patriarch's diabolical spirit. Later, the group gather for a nice turkey dinner, sans Donald, who is missing, and Victoria, who remains sequestered up in her room. When the turkey platter is opened, however, it is no turkey, but Elizabeth's disembodied head, which sits on the plate.

At a loss for what to do in this increasingly horrible situation, Williams stupidly decides to investigate the basement. This is a riveting scene which shows Milligan in top form as cinema poet, excelling even within the lowly confines of sexploitation cinema. As William slowly descends into the cellar, he is stalked by the hooded figure which has apparently been responsible for the killings thus far. In the average cinema treatment, this scene would be done using various cutaways and other camera tricks, showing the killer in shots separate from those of the protagonist, until such time as the two were destined to meet. However, here the killer skulks silently behind William, always in the same shot, sometimes mere inches away from the oblivious man - often, the killer is obscured almost to invisibility by hiding in William's shadow. William eventually comes across some incriminating artifacts, including a portrait which hears the inscription: "To H.C., my favorite girl, from Walter C., 1865."

The hooded figure strikes William, but Martha and Colin simultaneously appear and intervene. Yet the hooded figure waits, and when Colin and Martha have again left, kills William with a pitchfork to the jugular, further knifing and disemboweling him. When the killer finally strikes, the effect is

all the more startling, not only for William but the audience, as tension has been building due to the killer's dangerous proximity to the intended victim. This wonderfully theatrical scene boasts a powerful existential component, illustrating that just as William is being literally stalked by this "shadow of death," humanity itself is forever haunted by the "grim reaper," which follows it constantly, ever close and ready to claim its intended victims.4

Martha soon finds Colin hiding under the porch, and retrieves the booty he stole from the basement. She reads the inscription on the photograph, and is about to reveal the identify of father Walter's "favorite girl, H.C.," when the hooded figure appears and hacks her to death. The killer now chases Colin around the house, starting a fire in the process, as fire is a key Milligan element in purifying the earth of noxious family legacies- as well as serving as a metaphorical inferno for lowly sinners. Poor Colin, now on fire, races around the house in a frantic attempt to extinguish himself, while the hooded figure finally reveals himself to Elizabeth and Victoria - it is, of course, Hattie. Hattie reveals a long-winded, convoluted plot on her part to gain the Crenshaw inheritance for herself, for as it happens, she is also a member of this ill-fated family, by Crenshaw's first, unknown wife, a woman who died in childbirth. Hattie is "H.C.," Crenshaw's "favorite girl" and half-sister to Elizabeth and Victoria. As in Seeds of Sin, the family in general, and the women in particular, are well-advised to beware the half-sister, who is invariably in league with the sadistic father figure, in fact his agent of destruction.

Hattie intends to frame Colin for the murders and collect the inheritance for herself, as she feels she is entitled to this bounty. Apparently, Elizabeth and Victoria's mother abused Hattie monstrously, treating her as little more than an animal. This monster-mother also beat Colin, making him a half-wit - another fine example of abuse by a mother figure, one of the central themes in the Milligan canon. As Hattie rambles on manically, laughing at her perceived victory, Colin, still smoking from his earlier immolation, creeps up the stairs and attacks Hattie with a cleaver to the head. Both Colin and Hattie tumble down the stairs to their deaths, diabolically intertwined as they end their mutually hellish existence. As in Seeds of Sin, the final "fall" of the family empire is cannily depicted via the metaphor of a traumatic tumble

down the stairs for one or more participants. Victoria and Elizabeth embrace each other - now they only have each other. Suddenly, the doorbell rings, and the two exclaim simultaneously: "Lawyer Dobbs!" Not only are the two surviving siblings set to inherit the vast Crenshaw fortune, but the pair, shown physically bonded via their emotion-laden embrace, are now poised to start a female commune, perhaps escaping once and for all the demonstrably homicidal machinations of heterosexual culture.

The primary lesson in Ghastly is elemental, if grim: the heterosexual paradigm is false, malevolent, and doomed to failure. Goaded on by a mischievous patriarchy, men and women are shown as being completely unable to "live in sexual harmony," due to inner character flaws as well as exterior forces of conspiratorial manipulation. It is the rare instance wherein an emotionally-connected male/female couple can maintain sustained effort towards a mutual goal. The heterosexual couple contains within it two completely separate egos, each with its own agenda, often diametrically opposed to that of the other. Forces economic, political and cultural attack the couple from the outside, increasing the likelihood of failure. The nameless, faceless hooded figure in Ghastly well symbolizes all of these forces, both interior and exterior, which stalk and conspire against the desired solidarity of the male/female social construct. When this emblematic figure is subsequently revealed to be the exiled half-sister, Hattie, the killer's symbolic role becomes even more profound. All families are conspired against by that member (or members) who have been chastised, ostracized or marginalized from the primary family unit. It will be this excommunicated family member who will make it his life's goal to eliminate the remaining siblings, in an attempt to destroy or erase this family from history.

Death by pitchfork in The Ghastly Ones (1968).

Yet the hooded figure is not merely diabolical killer, but also god-sent savior, putting these bickering, miserable couples out of their misery by ending their suffering - as is evident by their constant acrimony, they are already doomed to failure and thus, by extension, is the entire heterosexual experiment upon which civilization is so precariously built. As with Seeds of Sin and elsewhere, the couples in Ghastly jump from affection to acrimony, from dumb lust to psychotic violence at the merest pretense, revealing how precarious is the emotional bond tying the two together. And as in the aforementioned film, any attempt to actually mate is invariably interrupted by an outside force, as the vengeful gods of the Milligan universe clearly do not want male and female to copulate, as this barbaric act may then lead to the horror of further creation, and the suffering of future generations.

Finally, the hooded grim reaper serves well as a stand-in for the missing patriarch, arguably the most powerful of the group even in his absence. As in Seeds of Sin, this Sadean father-in-absentia uses his obedient daughter -

once removed - as his agent of destruction to dismantle the makeshift matriarchy which set itself up in his absence. As witness the deranged "servants" Martha, Colin and Hattie, who in themselves form a fully functioning faux-family - Martha as mother, Hattie as father, and Colin as hapless child - the alternate doting on, and brutal physical punishment of the poor dumb man-child illustrates vividly how Milligan perceived the typical family dynamic - a torture chamber for the "children," who are virtual prisoners of the whims of their sadistic, mentally unstable "parents." Madness and violence are intrinsically connected in Ghastly, expressed through ritual sadism in a family setting, a common theme in much of Milligan's subsequent work.

Oddly, Ghastly does not propose a male homosexual lifestyle in place of the loathed heterosexual unit, as one might assume considering its creators. As in Seeds of Sin and Vapors, homosexuality receives an ambivalent, if not downright damning indictment almost as harsh as the judgment exacted against the "straights." The closest thing to a revolutionary social system seen in Ghastly is the potential emergence of a commune of mutually-dedicated women, represented by the surviving sisters, whose strong bonding during the film creates the only healthy or progressive social group to be found anywhere on Crenshaw Island. Only sisters strongly bound by a common purpose may eventually prosper, so long as they are not felled by enemies beforehand- and by conniving, malicious half-sisters foremost.

Joe Dante's infamous quote, that Ghastly "looked like a home movie from bedlam," albeit likely meant speciously, was not far off the mark - it is in fact the gruesome neodocumentary look of Ghastly, in which Milligan used a great deal of intimate, hand-held verite camerawork, which gives the film much of its raw emotional energy.5 Ghastly also uses color in a counter-intuitive way. Whereas many period filmmakers took great pains to design elaborate color palettes for their productions, Milligan relegated his entire production design to his loud and garish costume designs, letting the natural location dictate the overall color scheme. Also, the use of harsh spot lighting in interior shots ensured that many of the inside scenes in Ghastly boast deep, inky shadows, an aesthetic conceit that a traditional filmmaker would avoid at all costs, as the standard consensus for color cinematography

insisted on brightly-lit interior scenes where color was evenly distributed, contrast was minimal, and black shadows were virtually nonexistent.

Among other aesthetic experiments, including the aforementioned verite camerawork which lends the scenario a stark neo-realist flavor, Ghastly utilizes an interesting structural trick which will occur with regularity in subsequent Milligan films- during scenes in which two characters exchange dialogue (a common occurrence), about midway through the scene the camera changes position by a full 180 degrees, completely reversing the relative position of the two characters. (For example, if a scene begins with Victoria on the right, midway through the scene the angle changes so that she is now on the left). This breeches the traditional cinematography rule of the "axis of action," which states that the camera should never venture beyond an imaginary line which ends at the character(s), or subjects, being recorded -this rule is strictly enforced by most filmmakers, in order to avoid visual disorientation on the part of the viewer. Ghastly challenges this somewhat arbitrary notion, and by switching the position of the characters (known as a "reverse angle" shot), demonstrably alters the dramatic weight of the scene. Even more intriguing, this change in visual perspective often coincides with a noteworthy change in the power dynamic of the characters in question, as a character who was earlier at a distinct disadvantage finally gains the upper hand, perhaps ending up as victor in this particular argument or battle.

It is worth noting as well that as with many previous and subsequent films, Ghastly was virtually a one-man show for Milligan, who performed all of the following functionsdirector, photographer, co-author, editing, lighting, sets, costumes, make-up, sound recording and music mixing - making Ghastly as close to a personal art film ever released to mainstream cinema. For Ghastly is a most damning critique of heterosexual culture, a subject most likely addressed with similar intensity in the lost sexploitation films, and experimented with in Seeds of Sin. Not content to merely deconstruct the heterosexual paradigm by showing its inherent duplicity, ingenuousness and ultimate diabolism, The Ghastly Ones goes even further, largely succeeding in ritually destroying the entire heterosexual world via the magnificent microcosm decimated on ill-fated Crenshaw Island. The

only survivors of this assault on noxious male-female relations are the two sisters, who possibly share a romantic interest in each other, and who may indeed refashion the world as a radical lesbian commune, barring men and refusing to participate in the continuation of the human race. For in the world of Andy Milligan, it is truly the male-female couple, who destroy the world with their arrogant egos, their blind hubris and most importantly their production of suffering offspring who are, in reality, "The Ghastly Ones."

10

Torture Dungeon (1970)

As the sexploitation film market collapsed with the ominous approach of mob-financed hard-core pornography, grindhouse producers such as William Mishkin soon turned to another hardy exploitation genre, the "extreme" horror film. Tackling subjects and imagery the big studios would not touch (at least for several years), small films like Herschell Gordon Lewis' Blood Feast (1963) and George Romero's Night of the Living Dead (1968) proved that gruesome horror was big box office, and virtually nothing was off limits. Although Seeds of Sin and The Ghastly Ones preceded it, the first feature created for and marketed by producer William Mishkin as horror was Andy Milligan's Dungeon of Death (which Mishkin brilliantly retitled Torture Dungeon). Filmed in color, via the 16mm Auricon, on the barren beaches of Staten Island, New York,' Dungeon of Death (henceforth referred to as Dungeon) was one of Milligan's first all-out excursions into period melodrama, first experimented with in The Naked Temptress and The Degenerates.

Like so many of the Milligan sexploitation films, Dungeon is a period melodrama filmed in a cinema verite style, a conceit influenced heavily by both the underground film and experimental theater genres. Milligan's experience in both add greatly to his ability to create his raw, threadbare micro-dramas with a maximum of dramatic and aesthetic impact, and films such as Dungeon may look, even to the casual viewer, highly experimental and even somewhat dangerous. Visually, Dungeon borrows heavily from the aesthetics of the Byzantine Empire (circa 395-1450 GE.) both in the garish, ornate costuming (and conspicuously weird headpieces), and in the overtly religious patina which haunts the film from start to finish. As for the religious overtones, the themes of transgression and repentance, two cornerstones of the early Christian religion, are fundamental in Dungeon (as well in as most other Milligan films). As well, both royalty and peasantry in

Dungeon's microcosm reflect the tumultuous social structure of the Byzantine era, which saw rampant dissension, court intrigue and corruption. Even Dungeon's largely tangential, omnipresent, dreary librarymusic score evokes the liturgical music so prevalent during that era.

The tedious and convoluted plot awkwardly follows a corrupt royalty which wishes to obtain power to the throne via manipulating the peasantry. Long-time Milligan companion Gerald Jacuzzo is the ridiculous "Duke of Norwich," hamming up his role with mockShakespearean histrionics. Susan Cassidy plays Heather, a voluptuous peasant girl who finds out her orphaned past is really a lie. For a proclaimed woman-hater, Milligan knew how to pick strong and beautiful females as his protagonists, and in addition gave them some of the best of his always-rich dialogue; Heather's character in Dungeon is a fine exam ple. Richard Mason is singularly absurd as Ivan, a hunchback who also happens to be the Duke's whipping boy, colleague, and sexual partner, a character which thus embraces several dear Milligan themes. Longtime Milligan cohort Hal Borske plays the imbecile Alfred as a comical Elizabethan-era "Greek Chorus" who comments on the proceedings. Maggie Rogers, an accomplished theater actress with a unique countenance, plays the Milligan matriarch, a deformed, degraded elder woman who turns out to be the linchpin of the entire scenario. Milligan often gives the best dialogue, along with his most poignant philosophical observations, to the matriarch character, seemingly odd in that Milligan despised his own mother and mocked the notion of motherhood in general, yet sensible when one realizes that Milligan understood the domineering mother figure as the ultimate power figure in society.

Yet the most remarkable character in Dungeon is Magda, "the marriage counselor" who visits Heather on the day before her wedding, to consult her on how to be a blushing bride. Magda is one of Milligan's most astounding creations, an utterly abstract being whose presence in the scenario is entirely symbolic -Magda represents the goddess trilogy of antiquity incarnate: virgin-mother-crone. The actress playing Magda performs her role in an agitated state of sustained delirium. As Magda rushes in to Heather's chambers, she comes across as equal parts ominous demonic force and benevolent angelic manifestation. The woman is dressed in a surreal garment

featuring two towering white veils which flutter behind her like wings, making the old woman look like some sort of mammoth, demented butterfly, more specifically a guardian angel sent from heaven to protect Heather, who is indeed conspired against by multiple parties. After the daft motivational speaker leaves a baffled Heather, the Duke of Norwich comments snarkily, "There's more method in her madness than meets the eye," underscoring Magda's essential role as symbolic character, an acknowledgment which adds an element of the supernatural and the fantastic, suggesting that Dungeon is ultimately an allegorical fable. The character's name, "Magda," may even be a coy reference to "Mary Magdalen," the biblical whore who was rescued from madness by Jesus Christ, and became an icon for the modern penitence movement. From this angle, Magda's forewarnings to Heather to avoid certain transgressive pitfalls of the newly married take on an even more emblematic significance. Also noteworthy is the character's unusual genesis: according to biographer Jimmy McDonough, Milligan purportedly grabbed a woman off the street, fed her some hastily-scribbled lines, draped her in a makeshift costume, filmed the scene in one take, and let her go without even getting her name, making this capture of an anonymous performance all the more remarkable.'

In Andy Milligan's Torture Dungeon (1970), three ladies in waiting recoil before the suspended Christlike body of a prisoner, his nakedness further confusing revulsion and attraction (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

As with most Milligan films of this vintage, the scenario unspools largely via rushed dialogue exchanges between two characters, almost invariably in tight, claustrophobic two-shots, effectively capturing the imprisoned nature of doomed heterosexual relationships which Milligan portrayed so well. The admittedly theatrical quality of these play-like dramatic exchanges are subverted by the bizarre costuming, the threadbare, impressionistic interiors draped with scraps of mismatched fabric, the omnipresent stock music, and most vitally by Milligan's nervous, often hand-held camera, which prowls the set like an inmate seeking escape from asylum. Milligan's astonishingly primal eye assaults the viewer, refusing him the luxury of passive observer.

Although the main thrust of the plot is political intrigue in a corrupt royal court, the ensuing melodramatics mirror Milligan's primary expositional template - the dysfunctional family at war. By film's end, this gathering of pretenders to the throne will be revealed to be more "family" than they had ever imagined. Dungeon thus ruminates on some profound psychological issues, foremost the tragedy of the broken family and the tragic horrors which await each failed member.

The film opens with the beheading of an unknown person, followed by a glorious funeral procession along a Staten Island beach, at which one of the female attendees reveals not only that that fallen man was her brother, but that they were lovers, and that she is pregnant with his baby! Here, in a hastily-dictated nutshell, is Milligan's entire thematic core: murder, perversion, incest, all emanating from a severely dysfunctional family. This traumatic opening is counterpointed with an idyllic swimming scene between an attractive young man and a beautiful young woman, who frolic nude in a sublime lake surrounded by fecund nature. The setting is clearly meant to evoke the Garden of Eden, and an "Adam and Eve" about to fall. Milligan's camera, of course, is the serpent, prowling the space with a notion to subvert the innocence of this pastoral ecstasy. That the scene is punctuated

by goofy cartoon music shows exactly what Milligan thought of "straight" couples (as well as biblical bedtime stories).

Liberal nudity (especially male nudity, not surprising considering the artist's sexual proclivity) is sprinkled throughout Dungeon, and although nudity was common in grindhouse films of the time period, it is exceptionally candid here. When the Duke of Norwich at one point orders both of his lovers (a female and the hunchback) to confess their (primarily sexual) past, the act is reminiscent of various rituals in occult fraternal organizations such as the notorious "Skull & Bones," in which sexual confession makes the confessor vulnerable, thus bonded to the group. In addition, this forced extraction of cherished personal information from one party by another is a staple of sado-masochistic ritual, in which the dominant party demands the submissive party perform humiliating and revealing acts for the amusement of the former, and in so doing underscores the essential power dynamic of the group. As Ivan the hunchback tells his sad tale of woe, betrayal, abandonment, abuse and mutilation by an evil mother figure, he ends on a highly cliche, melodramatic note - "Mother was happy. I was miserable"-lending a corny, soap-operatic flavor to the proceedings (although the quote probably reflects Milligan's own childhood succinctly). The female's story is less horrific, yet still tragic - religion was forced on her, and she was eventually sold into virtual slavery, for in the Milligan universe, Religion and Family are the cornerstones of evil.

A precipitous shifting of loyalties, and an overriding political agenda, features prominently in many a Milligan film, and in Dungeon these are brilliantly expressed by the introduction of the matriarch, first seen in the titular "torture dungeon," where she appears to be responsible for the horrible crimes against humanity being committed there. Eventually, however, it is revealed that the prisoners are all her children -this tragic mother figure visits them periodically in order to soothe their nerves, give them hope, beg forgiveness for her sins, and plot revenge for their torment. Easy identification of the good guys and the bad guys is shifted cleverly and often in Dungeon, until the viewer is lost in a murky moral wasteland, unclear who to root for. Much of this moral and expositional ambiguity is also superimposed onto the template of familial relations- people who appear

to be related are revealed to be unrelated, and strangers who appear to be unrelated turn out to be siblings or lost parents, bound by bad blood.

In Andy Milligan's Torture Dungeon (1970), the ritual of marriage is thoroughly deconstructed; here the corrupt Duke of Norwich (Gerald Jacuzzo) presides over the sham wedding of the innocent Heather MacGregor (Susan Cassidy) and the imbecilic Alfred, Duke of Aberthy (Hal Borske), as Ivan the Hunchback (Richard Mason) and the royal court look on (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

As finally performed, the "royal wedding" of Heather and Alfred is a sorrowful, claustrophobic, perfunctory affair, punctuated by a cheesy libraryscore fanfare, a most cynical portrait of a barbaric "straight" social ritual as seen by a gay filmmaker. To emphasize Milligan's aversion to-yet fascination with-what he perceives as a false, obsolete ceremony, the idiot groom must be forced to kiss the blushing bride, a marvelous illustration of the "horrors" of heterosexuality from the homosexual viewpoint. On the wedding night, the bride naturally expects and wants sex, whereas the groom wants only to stuff his face with food. This complete lack of synchronicity

will expand to a most remarkable later scene, in which the bride is all but coerced into mating with her imbecile groom, most conspicuously to further the goals of empire, a telling satirical comment on the breeding practices of modern society, which perpetuates the insipid rite in order to continually fuel the fires, and fill the coffers, of the dominant political system.

The killings in Dungeon are punctuated by theatrical, cartoon-like gore told in quick shots with abrupt cutting, and not lingered on fetishistically like that of legendary misogynist Herschell Gordon Lewis. With Milligan, gory murder is a symbolic act (in Dungeon a punishment for the sins of lust and greed), not sustained at excruciating length for the voyeuristic enjoyment of the woman-hating male grindhouse viewer, as with most other gore films of the day. Yet the murders do carry allegorical import. One victim is nailed against a wall, as in the fable of Jesus Christ. Another is beheaded while stooped over a flower, a posture which suggests prayer. Another victim receives a dagger in the heart, a "Shakespearean" death with overt religious overtones. The liberal letting of blood throughout Dungeon clearly suggests the sacrificial blood of Jesus, and the killings, already ritual in nature, serve as a form of communion to the transgressions of the community (both the characters and arguably, the film's audience). Even Heather's story of being abandoned, wrapped in swaddling clothes and sent down river where she was found by a kindly stranger, mimics the tale of Jesus' similar journey at the hands of Mother Mary.

As might be expected, the sex in Dungeon is also primarily allegorical, and conspicuously non-erotic (at least from the traditional heterosexual male perspective). With Milligan, sex is not only a dirty act, to be avoided if possible and to be ashamed of if consummated, but it is often forced, either by physical and/or mental pressure, or by the momentum of unfortunate life circumstances. Either way, it is rarely of a "normal" variety, and certainly not a celebratory act, almost always being met with moans of anguish and immediate remorse. In Dungeon, the various and sundry sex acts additionally take on a curiously religious nature. As mentioned, Heather and William cavorting in naked ecstasy in the lake suggests the copulation of Adam and Eve, illustrating the "original sin" which then ignites the multifarious sins of the Family of Man. The "tri-sexual" orgies in Dungeon,

polymorphously perverse in content, also evoke religious lore, most clearly referencing the decadence which triggered the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Toward the film's end, there is a remarkable close-up of a mouth-to-mouth kiss between the Duke and his hunchback lover, the most overt homosexual moment in a film awash with such reference. (In existing prints, the scene was judiciously cut before actual fleshly contact was made, but the scene still shocks as the intent remains crystal clear.) This literally "close up" look at gay sex for a theoretically heterosexual audience underscores Milligan's rather obsessive fascination with contrasting personalities in sinister collusion, of diametric opposites being fatally attracted to each other. Here, the Duke and the Hunchback illustrate many binary oppositions: high-bred vs. low-bred, intelligence vs. ignorance, beauty vs. monstrosity, depravity vs. innocence, etc. The corrupt bureaucrat and his peasant lover also exemplify an archetypal sado-masochistic coupling, with one partner lording over his counterpart who willingly, even lovingly, complies with even the harshest dictates of his stern paramour. Yet their avowedly perverse collusion suggests not only synchronicity between traditional opposites, but a curious familial constancy between same which is highlighted in an extraordinary way by film's end. In short, the Duke and Ivan are revealed to be brothers not only in spirit, as they attest to by their curious sexual longings, but by their very biology.

After much convoluted expositional nonsense, much of it rendered almost unfathomable due to Milligan's poor sound recording and the performer's hasty mumbled dialogue delivery, orphan Heather finally locates her birth parent, the matriarch, who reveals a twisted, convoluted tale of familial betrayal and discord. The circuitous storyline is all but impossible to decipher - and it might be argued that the grindhouse audience couldn't have cared less-but if one listens carefully to the unfolding confession via several viewings, the brilliance of Milligan's expositional skills (if not his knack at incorporating plot elements via more sophisticated dramatic devices) can clearly be seen, proving that Milligan had demonstrable talent as a dramatist (as well as a tendency to proselytize). The gist is that this tragic matriarch is revealed to be the birth mother of virtually everyone in the entire kingdom, both king and fool, prisoner and prison-keeper, brother and sister. In

Dungeon, everyone turns out to be not only metaphorically but literally part of one big, unhappy family, a delightfully misanthropic comment on the nefarious "Family of Man" by an artist who had some truly dark thoughts on the subject. At the film's finale, reunited father and daughter pray over, and pay tribute to the grave of the fallen mother, a terribly touching moment which rather schizophrenically symbolizes both Milligan's fantasy-wish for death to all domineering matriarchs, but also the tragic murder of goodness, hope and kindness, of the "good" matriarch, in a world which has been completely over-run by the dark nature of the "beast" who calls himself man.

Dungeon is a rather unusual independent film, all the more precious as Milligan shot the film on 16mm reversal film, edited it by ripping scenes apart with his teeth, and gave the only extant internegative to producer Mishkin for a 35mm blow-up print. Yet is Dungeon ofDeath a horror film? There are no monsters other than human, no potentially supernatural beings other than Magda the marriage counselor, no diabolical apocalypse which rents the community asunder. There is only the masked killer, who attacks sexual transgressors with all the passion of a religious crusader. Yet this is horror, Milligan-style. Milligan's main message throughout his entire cinematic career, and one virtually shouted in all the genre horror films, is that the real horror is family. Sexual transgression is evil not only because it simultaneously worships and degrades the body, but the ensuing copulation traps more beings in an evil world, creating that malefic social structure from which none escape intact: the family. To Milligan, the family is as grotesque a man-made creation as any Frankenstein's monster or atom bomb. To Milligan, horror is the family unit, and from this angle, Dungeon is as horrific as they come. Incest, perverted sex, betrayal and murder - all ornamented via degenerative sado-masochistic ritual-can all be considered part of Milligan's singular "family values."

Aesthetically, Dungeon is one of Milligan's most exciting extant works. The unschooled, nervous (largely) hand-held camera prowls the slap-dash, home-made sets and dreary locations, zooming in on his halfway-house thespians adorned in bizarre, threadbare costumes, who spout inane dialogue rendered almost indecipherable via bad miking, the whole thing blown up so large (on the theatrical screen, at least) that the film frame looks more like a

grainy, impressionist painting than a real movie. Dungeon effectively contrasts vibrant, color-soaked sets and costumes against some grimy neo-realist location settings, creating a specific verisimilitude which combines the look of the average home movie with the overwrought high drama of the theatrical underground. For the budget-minded, "one take and get it right!" Milligan, one of the most impressive things about Dungeon are the wholly effective scenes with characters riding around on horseback, scenes which could not have possibly been caught on the fly, and which suggest an atypical amount of time and care spent by the filmmaker in their capture.

As seen, Dungeon brings new life to the concept of the "dysfunctional family," pitting neurotic, mad adults against each other in assorted cruel and perverse sado-masochistic relationships, which grow ever more toxic as they are apprised of their unexpected genetic relation to each other. Spontaneous torture invariably precedes violent lovemaking, amply connecting sex and violence as ill-fitting pieces in a most unholy sociological puzzle. But most of all, Dungeon revels in unabashed misanthropy and pessimism, and venomous lines such as "Always think the worst and you'll survive," mirror well the harsh philosophy of the filmmaker. Based on his art, one must come to the conclusion that Milligan had nothing but disdain for people, thinking them little more than deluded savages, and Dungeon clarifies this position in no uncertain terms: "We're all beasts by nature."

As with the previous sexploitation films, producer Mishkin assumed the cost of blowing the grainy 16mm film up to 35mm for theatrical distribution, retitled the film Torture Dungeon via a crudely inserted title card, and released it on a double bill with Milligan's diabolical take on Sweeney Todd, the "demon barber of Fleet Street": Bloodthirsty Butchers. Aided again by one of Mishkin's compelling, garish advertising campaigns, the lurid doublebill went on to accrue top box-office in both urban grindhouse and suburban drive-in situations, and played both circuits for at least a decade.'

11

Bloodthirsty Butchers (1970)

Bloodthirsty Butchers is Andy Milligan's loose adaptation of the tale of "Sweeney Todd, Demon Barber of Fleet Street." It was produced in Great Britain during Milligan's sojourn there, and may have been one of the films he intended to make for Leslie Elliot's Cinemedia company. Due to a falling out with Elliott and his father, the Cinemedia contract was dissolved after only two productions.' Milligan shot several more productions in England with seed money from his original sponsor, William Mishkin. Bloodthirsty Butchers (henceforth referred to as Butchers) was one of these productions.

The tale of Sweeney Todd, which has become something of a cultural phenomenon, began in 1846 with a serialized novel entitled The String of Pearls: A Romance, published in eighteen installments in The People's Periodical and Family Library, a popular British newspaper specializing in risque, lurid subject matter.' The novel tells of one Sweeney Todd, a homicidal barber who murders those customers who confess to carrying objects of value, including the titular string of pearls. Todd has ingeniously created a basement dungeon in which his hapless victims meet their grisly deaths. A few doors down, fellow entrepreneur Mrs. Lovett imprisons sad-sack bakers in her own cellar, in which are a bank of horrible furnaces to cook her legendary meat pies. The meat, of course, is supplied by Todd, who butchers his victims into bake-sized pieces for Lovett's peculiar product line. Meanwhile, a young woman, Johanna Oakley, seeks word of her true love Mark Ingestrie, feared lost at sea.

Speculation rages as to the authorship of the work; various sources claim Thomas Peckett Prest, George Macfarren and James Malcolm.' Most historians agree, however, that A String of Pearls owes a great deal to the recent novels of Charles Dickens, in which the dangers of a rapidly expanding urban culture may lead to personal tragedy. Dickens's novel Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-44) even mentions as a possible fate to unwary urban travelers that they be "made meat pies of or some horrible thing."4 A String of Pearls proved immensely

popular with the public, so much so that a theatrical production of the tale was mounted in 1847, before the original serial had finished its first complete newspaper run. Many subsequent theatrical productions followed, including a 1959 ballet, a 1962 production with book and lyrics by William Scott and Ken Appleby, and another 1962 production by Brian Burton.' Stephen Sondheim was inspired to write his own version of the tale circa 1973, purportedly after seeing yet another production of the tale, by Christopher G. Bond. Sond heim's hit musical, Sweeney Todd opened in 1979, and was adapted into a major Hollywood film in 2007 by Tim Burton.' All of these productions, Sondheim's included, offered audiences a grisly spectacle, with more than a nod to the Grand Guignol tradition.'

The first two film adaptations were silent productions, in 1926 and 1928. The first sound production came in 1936, starring popular British horror star Tod Slaughter. The film begins and concludes in a contemporary setting, and the tale of the demon barber is framed as an extended flashback. The George King production manages to squeeze an impressive amount of the original novel into a short running time. Although it abbreviates the story arc involving Johanna Oakley and Mark Ingestrie, and radically truncates the original finale, it is in some wise quite faithful to its source material. There is even a shortened version of Ingestrie's fateful sea voyage, and the African uprising which leads him to the problematic string of pearls. In a wholly invented subplot, Todd attempts to blackmail the elder Oakley in a design to win Johanna for himself. As for Mrs. Lovett, in this version she mans her own furnaces, and the main ingredient used in her meat pies is barely alluded to. The only false note in this adaptation is the addition of a comic-relief couple -common practice in film melodramas during this period-which tends to trivialize an otherwise crackling good thriller.

Milligan's Butchers came right on the cusp of a 1970 revival of the 1962 production of Sweeney Todd by William Scott and Ken Appleby. It is impossible to assess where Milligan's film fits into the chronology of the Sweeney Todd productions, but it might be worth considering the possibility that Milligan, or producer Leslie Elliott, were aware of the successful revival of the Scott/Appelby theatrical production when considering their own film version; as well, Christopher Bond may have been inspired by the release of Milligan's film in his decision to create his own updated version some three years later.

All extant film versions of the Sweeney Todd story, Butchers included, truncate major portions of the novel for brevity and dramatic impact. Among plotlines and subplots greatly shortened, or abandoned altogether are: the shipwreck which supposedly kills hero Mark Ingestrie; the imprisoned bakers in Lovett's charnel-house cellar; the extended trials of Johanna Oakley in her attempts to locate her missing lover; Todd's urchin-assistant Tobias sent to perish in a madhouse; the stink of rotting corpses emanating from a local church. However, Butchers does capture the spirit of one aspect of the tale quite well, for the bloodletting and violence in Butchers is quite fierce, well in keeping with the graphic detail depicted in the original novel and the Grand Guignol tradition which the tale has come to represent. Like other adaptations, such as Sondheim's and Christopher Bond's, Butchers radically departs from all but the most cursory elements of the original story. Scenarists John Borske and Milligan use the narrative of A String of Pearls more as springboard than template, but what they add to the story completely reframes the emphasis, so that Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett are minor, in some ways almost peripheral characters in a much larger story, which chronicles the intrigues, lusts, torments and duplicitous goings-on of a small community of lower-middle class Britishers at the tail of the 19th century. Butchers is a nightmare tale of damned, damnable couples, estranged, entangled and/or intensely connected by lust or greed. It depicts the viciousness of the male animal, and the low treachery of the female animal, in a melodrama which is so overdrawn, so unrelenting in its expositional conceit and emotional ferocity, it well captures the spirit of the Absurdist theatrical tradition.

Although Butchers is a small film, in that it is filmed primarily through an ascending cacophony of two-character dialogue exchanges, it comes across as virtually epic in scope, as the travails of each of these hapless couples overlaps ominously with all of the others, and eventually affects everyone in the community. Butchers is also a rabidly negative comment about the "free love" movement of the 1960s, and pokes merciless fun at the "modern" male/female relationship, trivializing fidelity, polyfidelity, pregnancy, group sex and necrophilia with equal savagery. Yet unlike similar films, which with their liberal sensibility all but canonized the new sexual freedom and the swinger's movement, such as Paul Mazursky's Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice (1969), Butchers' rabidly conservative, unflinchingly negative portrayal of similar activities and the utter havoc they wreak leaves no doubt as to their creators'

opinions about these social trends. There is also more than a touch of the grand soap opera tradition in Butchers, which comes across at times like a diabolical updating of Peyton Place (1957, d: Mark Robson), in which disclosure of myriad lurid secrets lurking within an ostensibly tranquil community leads to an apocalyptic upheaval, with disaster the sentence for many of its members. So hyperbolic is the drama in Butchers, so unreal the unending accrual of lurid and barbaric revelations, that at times the film jumps from straight melodrama to satire, albeit uncannily accurate in depicting various genres and trends. Roger Ebert and Russ Meyer did much the same thing in their brilliant Beyond the Valley of the Dolls (1970), which managed to effortlessly parody the sexploitation, youth counterculture, women's drama, and musical genres while itself remaining a structurally rich, narratively dynamic entertainment. Butchers accomplishes something similar, albeit in tighter focus and on a much smaller canvas- it is undoubtedly Milligan's most accomplished and mature comment on the Sexual Revolution, and considering the unerring verdict of the film, may also be his magnum opus, for it first condemns, and then literally dismembers, heterosexual culture.

One of the most notable conceits in Butchers is the fact that virtually the entire film is composed of scenes featuring two characters, both male and female and, less often, samesex couples. More often than not, these scenes are captured via claustrophobic two-shots, which focus almost exclusively on the characters in question, ignoring all but the most immediate periphery. This intimate focus gives Butchers much of its undeniable energy, insuring the emphasis will remain on its main theme: the (primarily negative) emotional, political and sexual synergy which emanates from two persons involved in mutual adventure. This vivid dialectic most often takes the form of the heterosexual couple engaged in amorous, entrepreneurial and/or criminal activity (Sweeney and Mrs. Lovett) Johanna and Jarvis, Tobias and Rosie, Anna and Mr. Fisk). When male and female are not conspiring together other, same-sex couplings, such as Sweeney and his male customers or Mrs. Lovett and her female customers, act as fitting substitutes. In all instances, the dynamic between the "two" is of key interest. Whenever two characters meet in Butchers, the exchange almost invariably begins as benign, but soon descends into bickering, arguing, accusation and betrayal. Yet the overall focus of Butchers is that of various domestic couples squabbling, either over trivial matters or over matters of great import - in this way, Butchers states, and

restates, its basic purpose, which is the deconstruction and annihilation of the heterosexual paradigm.

Further, whenever a third party enters a scene, the result is inevitably tragic, as the introduction of this person into the proceedings (whom may be seen as representing the outer world in microcosm), has the consistent effect of severing the fragile bond of the two characters in question, whose conspiracy is rent asunder. When Sweeney breaks in on a tryst between nightclub floozy Anna and her lover-manager, the result is a fierce fight between the men which ends only with the entrance of a fourth person, who performs the function of restoring balance to the group. When Johanna and Jarvis make love, creepy Tobias watches from the wings, a secret third party whose intentions are decidedly malevolent. When Tobias enters Sweeney Todd's shop as Jarvis is getting a shave, Todd and Tobias brutally attack the young man, leaving him for dead. When Sweeney intervenes between Anna and Fisk a second time, murder occurs. Even in the traumatic scene between Tobias and his pregnant girlfriend Rosie, it is the third party-the fetus-which prompts Tobias to murder both the mother and the child in cold blood. Finally, when Mrs. Todd catches her husband in bed with Mrs. Lovett, the lovers conspire to murder the betrayed woman. It would appear that the sacred male-female social construct as represented in Butchers cannot sustain intrusion from any third party, that party symbolizing society in general, which apparently has an invariably deleterious effect on the strength of the heterosexual group - as Fisk cynically but knowingly notes, in Butchers three is definitely "a crowd," i.e., the unruly, murderous mob of an anarchy-minded community.

Sweeney Todd (John Miranda) prepares to punch his wife (Linda Driver) in the face, vividly if brutally expressing the intrinsic link between lust and violence, from Bloodthirsty Butchers (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

One of the most intriguing and important changes in Butchers, which departs radically from the source material, is the fact that both main characters, Sweeney Todd and Maggie Lovett, are married, each having an invalid spouse secured away, who suffer the duel fates of personal disability and spousal betrayal. This shocking plot point immediately sets up both Todd and Lovett as rather despicable creatures, even before their more murderous business tendencies have become apparent. Sweeney's wife is a hopeless alcoholic-and likely an agoraphobe -who hides at home, waiting for her errant husband to return, and suffering his cruel verbal and physical assaults with the resignation of a career masochist. Likewise, Mr. Lovett has suffered some sort of tragic accident, which seems highly suspect, and is now confined to bed, unable to walk more than a few steps, and reliant on his wife's employees for even the basic necessities of life. He, too, suffers quietly his fate and indignation, even

while his spouse betrays and plots aggressively against him. The basic premise of Butchers thus seems to be that its two main characters, both villains, are first and foremost the products of failed heterosexual relationships-whether they are victims or instigators of these failed liaisons is open to conjecture, but both actively exploit the situation in order to achieve their own self-interested goals, both economic and sexual.

Butchers opens with a short scene that introduces the aforementioned "law of two" which defines the film. A young woman walks down a street, and soon meets up with a young man; the two of them then walk off together, nowbound as a couple. It is left ambiguous as to whether the rendezvous was a planned meeting of lovers, or a prostitute picking up a john as a random happenstance - and the ambiguity was likely intentional, as the cynical Milligan might have stated that the "romantic" bond between lovers and the lust-bound business partnership between the tramp and the cad are much the same thing. In either case, the whorish, manipulative female and the lust-addicted, predatory male make up the immutable core of the sacred and/or profane heterosexual pairing on which Butchers proceeds to meditate on, mock and finally dissemble with brutal savagery.

On famous Fleet Street, the notorious barber Sweeney Todd (John Miranda) caters to a young man (Frank Echols) just in from Ireland, seeking his fortune in London. The young hopeful confides to the entrepreneur that things haven't turned out as he had hoped, and no employment prospects are on the horizon. In the course of discussion, Todd notices a valuable ring on the customer's hand, and when its owner refuses to part with it, the malicious barber casually ensnares the man, crudely dismembers his right hand, and extracts the ring to add to his collection. Meanwhile, down the block, shopkeep Maggie Lovett (Jane Hilary) is selling a woman one of her infamous "meat pies." The customer complains rudely about some of Mrs. Lovett's practices, and the shop-owner grimaces as she endures the boorish chastising of this person, whom she obviously loathes, in order to exchange funds for her culinary services.

These two remarkably similar scenes illustrate the cheapness and anonymity of modern urban life, which makes rootless travelers and rural visitors easy prey to the heartless exigencies of the industrial revolution, underscoring the essentially cannibalistic nature of modern capitalism in which individuals have become mere laborers, customers, parts in the immense societal grinding

machine called culture. This theme remains relatively intact from the original source novel, but Butchers adds a whole other dimension of sexual politics to the scenario. In the world according to Butchers, both male and female are seen as mercenary, even merciless, towards members of their own sex, who serve no useful function other than that of providing short-term economic gain. It is only with members of the opposite sex that these desperate individuals bother to negotiate with, in some cases even suffer for, for only from these may they receive coveted erotic titillation and sexual release.

In stark contrast to these scenes of cynicism and brutality towards one's peers, Mrs. Lovett's assistant, Johanna, visits a crippled man upstairs, who we soon learn is Mrs. Lovett's husband John (Jonathan Holt). This wild departure from the source material suggests that this disabled patriarch was in some manner made ineffectual - in effect, impotent - by the vile emotions emanating from his duplicitous mate. Even though the accident which disabled him is described as self-induced, surely the spirit of the wife was present to guide the husband to his tragic downfall. Now confined to a bed, his only apparent contact with the outside world is from Mrs. Lovett's employee, Johanna (Annabella Wood), a comely orphan girl who takes care of the fallen master of the house. As Johanna cares for the invalid, it becomes clear that the two are very fond of each other, and the tender relationship mimics that of an ailing father and his doting daughter. Each in fact confesses how important the other is to them, and in this revelation the pairing of John and Johanna comes as close to a sympathetic male-female bond as will be seen in Butchers- even the sappy library music used to score the scene hints at the vapid unreality of the relationship, so unlike anything else in the community. This serendipity is short-lived however, as Johanna mentions John's "therapy," which consists of bloodletting, a common if dubious medical practice of the late Victorian era. As Johanna ponders the wisdom and efficacy of the procedure, she turns John's arms around, and we can see that his wrists are horribly swollen, even mangled from repeated invasive procedures. Although the effect is somewhat unconvincingly conveyed via stage putty, the effect still startles as the conclusion one draws is that Mr. Lovett is being periodically "bled dry" by his evil partner, in what must be a very painful procedure. To reinforce this disturbing revelation, a menacing young man now enters, and orders Johanna to leave. This hulking figure of male violence is Tobias Ragg (Berwick Kaler), Mrs. Lovett's other employee, and possible occasional bedmate.$ Glaring at his

patient menacingly and calling his name with utter contempt, Tobias takes a straight razor, the same implement of death Sweeney Todd uses to decimate his community, and slashes violently at the invalid's wrists. Blood trickles into a nearby pan as Mr. Lovett shivers at the pain of the ritual, but even more ghoulishly, Tobias (and by extension his employer) clearly enjoys inflicting this pain on the poor fellow. This identifies the Lovett marriage as a strictly sado-masochistic affair, with the woman in this case being the punisher-enforcer, and Tobias, functioning as her surrogate child, serving as her agent of destruction. We thus have a "son" abusing and punishing a disabled patriarch, with the endorsement of a domineering mother, a trademark Milligan trope - and both appear to benefit from the extracted blood of the fallen father, clearly an Oedipal arrangement of note.

At the bakery, Mrs. Lovett leaves Johanna in charge while she runs some errands. Once alone, the hungry orphan girl greedily nibbles at some food, but is cut short when an irate woman enters, demanding a refund -the latest meat pie she purchased contained a hank of black, bushy hair! Johanna appeases the dissatisfied customer, and a sassy young tart named Rosie (Ann Arrow) follows next, demanding to see her boyfriend, the thug Tobias. This scene is constructed effectively so that one counterpart to Johanna is quickly, and somewhat interchangeably, replaced by another. It is interesting to note that it is only in those rare moments when she is alone that the lonesome orphan girl resorts to comfort activities like stealing a bite to eat, or humming folk songs to herself, reinforcing her position as an outsider to mainstream society. Johanna is finally rescued from these assaultive females by the arrival of Jarvis (Michael Cox), her true love, who has returned from the sea and now promises, through marriage, to whisk his beloved away from this life of dependence on the whims of crazy women. Unable to contain their lust, Johanna and Jarvis retire to the back alley. Undressing quickly and proceeding towards intercourse their transgressions are, unbeknownst to them, espied upon by the voyeur Tobias, who watches from the wings, awash in erotic stimulation. The introduction of this third character into the scene also introduces evil - as the two lovers remind us of Adam & Eve in their stark, naked simplicity, Tobias may remind us of the serpent, whose shadowy presence spells doom for all.

The heart of Butchers, ironically, is a 12-minute sequence not originally in the Britishlensed production. Upon presenting the finished product to William Mishkin, the producer declared that the running time was short by a reel, and

gave Milligan enough funds to add the needed extra footage, which was filmed in Staten Island, New York.' What Milligan and co-scenarist John Borske came up with is nothing short of amazing, greatly expanding the tiny "community" depicted in the original film, as well as deftly underscoring the film's main theme, the precarious and volatile nature of heterosexual relations. Backstage at an unnamed theater, theater owner Mr. Fisk (David Pike) harangues his sexy young performer Anna (Susan Cassidy), accusing her of sabotaging the act, among other sins. As the heavilymade-up tart defends herself, the tables swiftly turn, and Anna gains confidence to accuse her accuser of grossly mistreating her. Fisk defends her highly exploitative schedule-"five shows a night, forty-five minutes a show..."-but Anna will have none of it. Fisk tries to grab a quick fondle, clarifying that this is more than a business partnership, but Anna rebuffs him, bringing up yet another element of the increasingly complicated equation - Fisk is married, and has promised to leave his wife to be with her. Fisk tries to appease the disgruntled wench with a pitiful raise, but Anna wants more - much more - including top billing on the theater marquee. Anna knows that she has her boss where she wants him, due to his apparent sexual addiction to her. Anna threatens to leave if her demands aren't met, and Fisk responds by getting physically rough, the only way he knows how to tame these uppity "waterfront tarts." Fisk declares he will not meet her unreasonable demands, but Anna casually counters that he should then get himself "another girl." Fisk sheepishly responds that he cannot do that, and when Anna asks why, he becomes evermore bashful - Anna has some powerful hold on Fisk, as yet unnamed. Lowering himself to his knees, Fisk whispers to Anna: "I adore you ... with all my soul." Fisk bows his head in shame, for in the misogynist world of Andy Milligan there is nothing worse for a man than to confess his love for a lowly "waterfront tart," an admission of moral weakness which makes him the lowest of humans. To augment Fisk's act of degradation, Anna spits in his mouth, a ritual sado-masochistic gesture which clearly underscores who is the power figure in the duo. Yet the remarkable scene ends on an even more ironic note - as Fisk leaves, Anna prepares for her performance by stripping, and appears about to walk onstage naked, or at least loosely attired. So Fisk surely exploits Anna just as she exploits him, both parties being guilty of the crass manipulation of their bedpartners for economic, emotional and political gain. Here, the proverbial "battle of the sexes" is illustrated vividly, how each party accuses the other of the partnership's failings, how easily the power dynamic switches polarity to put the apparent underdog back on top again, in a fluid

depiction of the "yin-yang" of relationships and its often overt sado-masochistic underpinnings. The entire flawed structure of modern heterosexuality is well-documented in this bleak scene, filmed in deep shadow, depicting in almost metaphorical fashion the black emotional void of two corrupt souls, each trying to out-cheat the other, and using the emotional dependence of their partner as bait.

Post-performance, Anna returns to her dressing room only to find a horny Sweeney Todd waiting for her. He paws her lustily as she asks when he is going to dump his wife in order to be with her! Anna, a true Milligan harlot, cheats shamelessly on both of her lovers, and wishes the destruction of their sanctified partnerships. As well, this question reveals that both of the malignant entrepreneur-villains in Butchers boast spouses languishing in the periphery. Anna next complains that Todd is "too rough" on her during their lovemaking, but the molester counters that she likes it rough, by now a predictable nod to Milligan's more mundane sado-masochistic proclivities. However, when Anna ponders if a relationship built on lust and violence can go "too low," Todd breathlessly declares, "There is no low, when two people become one!"-in other words, there are none more capable of moral depravity and social transgression than a male and a female in carnal bondage. Todd thus states Butcher's central theme clearly and succinctly -the heterosexual couple is the most malevolent force ever unleashed on civilization. The essentially farcical nature of heterosexual love is subsequently illustrated as Todd and Anna grope each other ferociously, while a horrible Irish jig plays in the background, mocking and trivializing the encounter as something impulsive and comical, two dumb animals groping blindly at raw flesh to attain something deeply spiritual, something unreachable by vile claws.

Fisk enters the dressing room, adding the third element to the two already conjoined, and as expected, all hell breaks loose. Seeing that his beloved Anna is the tramp he always thought she was, Fisk attacks Todd, and the cads commence a rough-and-tumble fight which looks conspicuously like the previous amorous gropings of Anna and Todd -the continuation of the horrid, jolly background music underscores this notion, that lust and violence are virtually interchangeable, and erotic love is as absurd, and meaningless, as a barroom brawl. Clearly, a fourth is needed to balance things out before they spin out of control, so another character enters shortly-a bizarre drag queen named Corky (George Barry). Corky is one of Milligan's marvelous abstract

characters, like Magda in Torture Dungeon, functioning as pure symbol and lifting the scenario to allegorical level. Corky, ostensibly another performer at the dance hall, is a middle-aged man wearing horrifically heavy facial make-up, like that of a circus clown, in an absurd and insulting caricature of what a woman's painted face might look like to a career misogynist. Wearing a frumpy blue satin dress, Corky does not appear to be sincerely trying to impersonate a female, but merely to mock certain emblematic icons of the gender.10

Corky quickly breaks up the fight, because surely he is not of this earth - he is perhaps a queer angel sent from the post-heterosexual world to restore balance to a society gone irredeemably mad thanks to unchecked male-female lust. More than once, Corky literally gets between two or more parties, in an attempt to dispel the highly-charged negative energy surging between them, in effect to introduce something other than male-female synergy into the proceedings- Corky even offers to take Anna on the road with him and his dragpartner, "Ginger," an eventuality which would certainly change the sexual chemistry of the group Anna runs around with. In a hilarious coda, as soon as Corky and Fisk exit, Todd demands to have sex with Anna. Even after all the trauma endured by all parties, Todd lusts. In fact, it seems apparent that the violence he has witnessed and contributed to has made him even hornier, and the dark connection between dumb, amoral heterosexual lust and violence is brightly, if crudely expressed with this amazing revelation. Even more damning, Anna submits to his advances, either unable or unwilling to diffuse the malevolent energy sparked by male-female conspiracy.

Sweeney goes home to visit his wife, Becky (Linda Driver), a sad alcoholic shut-in. The scene takes place in a tiny, suffocatingly claustrophobic room, and the ensuing exchange has all the earmarks of two animals trapped in a small cage, forced by their imprisonment into confrontation. The ill woman pleads with her husband for attention, kindness and mercy, but receives none, instead inviting her mate's utter disdain - Todd chastises and berates his wife in terms increasingly harsh, until Becky falls to her knees, literally begging Todd for mercy. This exchange reinforces earlier observations that in Butchers, whenever a man and a woman are confined in emotional bondage, one partner will be the dominant figure, doling out cruel, often sadistic punishment for his pleasure, while the other is passive, accepting the tortures of her mate with masochist-tinged resignation. There is never an even balance of power between couples, and the dominant one will by definition take control of the relationship, usually

to the other's extreme disadvantage. This eventuality is harshly illustrated when Becky, who finally summons up the courage to spit in her tormentor's face, is rewarded for this act of independence by a brutal beating from her husband. Becky soon falls unconscious from the cruel blows, and the ever-lusting Todd takes the subsequent opportunity to rape his comatose wife, ravaging her from behind, with clear allusions to anal intercourse. The brutality of the male partner in this scene succinctly underscores the intrinsic connection between lust and violence which animates Butchers (and other Milligan films). This scene also echoes an earlier scene with Mrs. Lovett's invalid husband, clarifying that in the loveless world of Butchers, the passive mate of a brutal spouse will be invariably exploited, abused, and conspired against with a savagery usually associated with the most bestial in the animal kingdom, leaving them emotional and/or physical cripples.

Sexual overtures quickly descend to violence, as Tobias Ragg (Berwick Kaler) prepares to rape Johanna Jeffrey (Annabella Wood) in Andy Milligan's brutal Bloodthirsty Butchers (1970) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Later, Tobias corners Johanna in a dark corner of the pie shop, and threatens to blackmail her for her sexual indiscretions with Jarvis in the back alley. Johanna counters that she knows of his affair with the slattern Rosie, and the two agree on an uneasy truce. To consummate the deal, Tobias attempts to rape Johanna, but the quick-witted young woman knocks him out with a nearby tool -in Butchers, the threat of lust-induced violence is ever-present in all male-female interactions. A hilarious, if racist scene follows, wherein Jarvis attempts to get a string of pearls (one of a very few references to the original source novel) appraised -by a Jewish jeweler. The sneaky shopkeep offers insultingly low prices for the pearls, all the while trying to extract pertinent information from its owner. The jeweler's dialogue is comprised almost entirely of shtick - "My wife should be so lucky- if I had a wife!"- in a highly cliche, arguably offensive depiction of the perceived archetype of the "Jewish shyster." One is tempted to believe that Milligan wrote the scene into Butchers solely to express disdain for Curtis Elliott, father of Leslie Elliott. Leslie Elliott ran Cinemedia, the company that Milligan had a three-film contract with. The contract fell through due to the intervention of Elliott's father, and Milligan purportedly had a vicious argument with the Jewish entrepreneur, a confrontation which doomed the partnership for good." Yet even in this scene, with two same-sex parties attempting a mutually agreeable business transaction, certain elements of the traditional heterosexual dynamic seen elsewhere in Butchers are hinted at. The jeweler at first tries to entice, then bargain, and finally threaten Jarvis, as the young man has something the jeweler desperately wants. Jarvis, accordingly acts alternately coyly and intuitively in regards to the jeweler's increasingly seductive promises and claims. Together, they perform a little dance which is remarkably similar to certain aspects of the heterosexual courtship ritual.

As Jarvis now walks through the streets of London, he is stalked by Tobias; is this a coincidence, or are Tobias and the jeweler in cahoots? Meanwhile, back at the pie shop, John Lovett confesses to Anna that he fears for his life, and when he subsequently hobbles out of his room in a feeble attempt to engage the outside world, Tobias brutally attacks and dismembers him, confirming the invalid's worst fears about the human race. Elsewhere, Jarvis soon arrives at Sweeney Todd's for a shave and a haircut. Jarvis tells Todd about his upcoming marriage to Johanna, and the barber warns him of the many horrors of heterosexual marriage. According to the cynical barber, he only got married because "I got tired of payin' for it every time I wanted a piece!" Todd

continues on a long-winded rant about the flaws of the female gender, and admonishes Jarvis: "The very first day you're married, don't let her have her own way- train her for a few months." Todd continues with a bizarre theory about women functioning in easily-defined emotional cycles-"Women can't stand happiness for more than three days at a time, it drives them wild!"-which clearly shows at least what the scenarists believed heterosexual men think of their women.

As Jarvis ponders this diatribe against womankind, behind him is the store window, with Sweeney Todd's name strung across it in large paper letters. The audience sees this in reverse, however, and as the window curtain, and the camera, crops out most of the name, what stands out conspicuously during one key moment are the letters "YENEEW," which of course spelled frontwards, as they should be, are "WEENEY." Irregardless of this emblem's intentionality, it is an amusing comment on these two "weenies," dumb males deeply ensconced in phallocentric ideology, of which systemic misogyny and ill-informed female folklore is an integral part.' Unwisely, Jarvis befriends Todd, perhaps as a gesture of solidarity as the barber has just imparted what may have seemed to him important advice about adult life-he shows the mercenary merchant the string of pearls. Right on cue, Tobias now enters the barbershop, and after sneaking a conspiratorial glance at Todd, swings into action - the men overpower and attack Jarvis, stealing his pearls and leaving him for dead. Again, the introduction of the third character into a group of two leads to havoc and tragedy, and the scene also shines a harsh light on a fatally naive belief in the notion of male solidarity.

A key scene follows, in which a peculiar, very nervous customer named Mr. Busker (William Barrel) enters the bakery, purchases one pie and orders another. What separates him from the average patron is the fact that he pays extra for "special orders," which enables him to choose the "parts" he wants. Busker is surely aware, unlike the rest of the community, that Mrs. Lovett's Meat Pies contain human flesh-as he whispers to the baker exactly which "part" he wants for tomorrow's pie, the request causes the shopkeep to blush and chastise him, so presumably either male or female genitals have been ordered. Also, there is a strange allusion to Busker having a sister, who apparently does not venture outside in the daytime - either the sister is some sort of vampire or, more likely considering the male's peculiar taste in meat, there is no sister at all, the brother having previously killed and eaten her. In a large city such as

London, who in either case would miss one more pathetic weirdo? In any case, Busker singly represents industrial capitalism's knowing collusion in the decimation of the human race, who gladly exploit their fellow humans, treating them as mere cattle for use as laborers, consumers and even manufactured product. Although no similar character appears in the source novel, this added scene expresses well the sentiment of the original story, its disdain for the increasing urbanization of society thanks to the industrial revolution.

Some time later, Tobias and Rosie argue in their filthy little love nest. Rosie, apparently another female drunkard, threatens her bedmate in no uncertain terms: "You had the pleasure, now you pay the price!" In Butchers, a woman in love (or more accurately, lust) is little more than a prostitute, offering sex to men only for a tangible reward. To clarify what she means, Rosie reveals, "That babe's staying right where it is, cuz that's the only hold I have over you." The "third" in this social grouping is apparently Tobias and Rosie's illegitimate, and unwanted child, surely a fly in the ointment as far as the irresponsible Tobias is concerned. Correctly, Rosie intuits that this unwanted pregnancy has finally given her the power she has always desired over her brutish mate, and they both sense simultaneously that Tobias is indeed in a tough spot, a notion reinforced by Rosie's dark edict: "Once you give the woman the upper hand, honey, you've had it!" Alas, when two dimwits try to outsmart each other, one must perforce resort to violence to achieve victory- Tobias formulates a plan on the spot, and after forcing Rosie to write a note which will serve as his alibi, the ghoulish cad stabs the poor girl in the stomach. Of course, this abominable act also destroys the unborn fetus, the fatal "third" in this scenario, thus also symbolically destroying the hope of human procreation for all time.

Later, in the dance hall dressing room, Sweeney Todd and Anna continue their argument from earlier. Anna declares that she will no longer offer her sexual favors to the horny barber unless he divorces his drunken sop of a wife; Todd counters that this will be impossible, and demands that Anna continue to sexually service him regardless of any commitment on his part. Anna counters that unless Todd gets rid of wife Becky in four days, she will blackmail him and spill the beans, which will inevitably lead to a nasty and expensive divorce for Todd.

Contemplating for a moment his determined if reckless foe, Todd compares Anna to Desdemona, the tragic harlot from Shakespeare's play Othello (aka

Othello, the Moor of Venice, ca. 1603), a most conspicuous high-culture reference in this lowest of places. Todd describes the character to Anna, stating that the comely but duplicitous Desdemona was accused of cheating on her husband, who subsequently made love to her while she slept, in effect raping her. Anna counters, shocked, "Shakespeare wrote that?," the point being that the duplicity and treachery inherent in the human condition is eternal, and has been chronicled in art since its inception, from the highest cultural outlets (Shakespeare) to the lowest (grindhouse trash). Going in for the kill, Todd observes, "Desdemona has this big scene where she pleads for her life, but you're not ready for that!," and he strangles Anna with a silk scarf. Fisk enters the room, and Todd kills him as well, stabbing them both savagely and then posing them to make the scene look like a either a lover's quarrel or a double suicide.

Later that evening finds Sweeney Todd and Maggie Lovett in bed together, a conjugation hinted at throughout Butchers but unstated until now. Their relationship is not only economically and socially motivated, but sexually as well - they now form the perfect archetype of the diabolical, dysfunctional heterosexual couple which Butchers has been portraying all along, and whose only fruits are invariably evil. The two discuss the possibility of leaving town, as their accumulated crimes threaten soon to catch up with them - Maggie reveals that they have murdered 258 people, a staggering number which positions them as one of the worst serial-killing teams in all history. In a wonderful up-angle shot, Todd picks the dirt from under his fingernails as he callously states, "Beggars, thieves, prostitutes- scum of the earth! We did a good thing getting rid of them." This utter disdain for humanity, especially those unfortunates of the lower realms, expresses not only a systemic misanthropy shared by these egregious entrepreneurs, but also a form of ultra-conservative, elitist "class genocide," wherein those who are unable or unwilling to work at an honorable profession are seen as "worthless eaters," deserving of the most brutal extermination.

Later, Maggie unveils a sinister plan to get rid of Todd's wife, the last remaining obstacle to their freedom - lure Becky up to the roof and push her off, making the murder look like the unfortunate accident of a tottering inebriate. Todd responds to this despicable strategy to destroy his soulmate thusly: "Maggie, you're my kinda woman!" Conveniently, Becky Todd shows up at Lovett's place, demanding to see her cheating husband, and Todd obliges,

leaping out of a closet and beating her into unconsciousness. In the basement, Tobias confesses that he has killed Rosie, and wants money from Todd and Lovett to keep quiet about all the goings-on. While they pretend to fetch the loot, Todd and Lovett order Tobias to return to his work, which is to dismember the parade of human flotsam that stumbles its way into their clutches, creating the "product" for Mrs. Lovett's bold experiment in opportunistic capitalism. Tobias apparently takes his work to heart - he savagely hacks apart Becky's body, which still twitches with life, venting an adolescent blood-rage with passionate ferocity-he is surely annihilating society in toto, a savage man-child killing his disciplinarian "parents" (Todd & Lovett) via this unfortunate surrogate. The heterosexual experiment has failed, and who better to put it out of its misery but its hopelessly damaged, clinically deranged spawn?

All that is left is to convey this message to the world. Elsewhere, an anonymous young couple are the first to receive this stark missive of the failure of human heterosexuality. As they bicker back and forth like all those who preceded them, the woman unveils a meat pie she has just purchased - its contents are a perfectly-severed female breast, the nipple sitting pretty in the middle like a cherry. This highly unlikely slip-up on the part of Tobias or Lovett does, however, send a strong and powerful "message" to its recipient, that the human race is doomed, as this dismembered mammalian gland surely stands for the symbolic death of all human procreation, which can no longer be nurtured by a mother's breast.

Butchers' finale is relatively epic in scope, as the scenario expands to include at first four, and later even more characters which, in this microcosmic setting, is certainly "a crowd." The recipients of the breast-pie run to the local constable, and are soon joined by Johanna, and another citizen. The storming of the Lovett/Todd death factory is conveyed humorously via a veritable "conga line" of eight or more characters, who burst through Todd's back door and overpower London's two most charismatic villains. As so often in the films of Andy Milligan, the resolution of the main conflict is more of a hasty afterthought than an important plot point, and the entirely ambiguous capture of the villains in Butchers reinforces the notion that Milligan was far more concerned with long, revealing dialogue exchanges, which obsessed lovingly on his ill-fated characters, than in lingering on any cliche plot machinations. This aesthetic quirk is yet another nod to the avant-garde theatrical tradition, where

plot is either abolished entirely, or mutilated in the service of philosophic rumination or emotional revelation.

With the monsters of humanity now vanquished, one might assume that all is well, that the heterosexual experiment may have survived a near-death experience, and is ready to burst forth in new, hopeful resurgence. Johanna and Jarvis, Butchers' paper-doll emblems of the best (or worst?) of the heterosexual paradigm, are about to begin their life together, away from all the past horrors of errant capitalism, in that promising new land called "America." A neighbor joins them to wish them well, and underscores the couples' implicit intent by stating, "You'll have beautiful babies!" She then offers the couple a going-away present more meaningful than she could imagine - a kidney pie. While kidney pie is a British culinary staple, made not from human flesh but from the organs of ox or lamb, this tired "joke" of the baked good's gruesome, evocative name hides a most insidious message: wherever man and woman conjoin in a conspiracy to further the human race, bloody death will follow. Further, with each heterosexual couple that promises (or threatens) to bring unwanted new life into the world with their unchecked lusting, the value of humanity becomes ever cheaper. The arrogant, egotistical lust of the male-female coupling ensures that humanity is finally reduced to mere pieces of flesh, another consumer product like everything else, well symbolizing the cannibalistic nature of society, especially since the industrial revolution.

Like Seeds of Sin and The Ghastly Ones, Butchers is a largely consistent portrayal of the heterosexual couple in demise, an ongoing disintegration illustrated by various sundry male-female groupings, all doomed to failure by their lusts and greeds, encouraged in their destruction by outside forces. As the main couple, Sweeney Todd and Maggie Lovett come across as ersatz authority figures, default leaders of the community. As their ill-born partnership crumbles, so too do all the others, each toppling, one after the other, like dominoes. Todd and Lovett are by far the most powerful duo in the group, and may also have an age advantage over the others, so that they also function as surrogate parental figures to their peers, and in some wise fulfill the role of the malevolent parents seen in many another Milligan film. Yet whether as potential breeders or dishonest entrepreneurs, Butchers states uncategorically that it is the heterosexual social unit, with its inerrant ability to poison culture via its self-centric agenda, which is the true villain - it is the male and the

female, in conspiracy against society through their ego-driven lust for omniscience, who are history's "bloodthirsty butchers."

Butchers also mounts a vicious attack on the apparently obsolete Victorian notion of "romantic love," depicted as offering only pain and death for all who succumb to it. Couple after couple find that their destruction is directly related to their emotional vulnerability to their partner, due to a sexual addiction to same disguised as "love." Even Butchers' "happy heterosexuals," Johanna and Jarvis, are brought to the edge of annihilation by their naive belief in the efficacy of love to conquer all, and as witness their ominous coda, they may not even now escape their fate. Most notably, it is only after the villains of the piece, Todd and Lovett, dare to plan their future life together, a blueprint indistinguishable from the naive hopes of a pair of teenage newlyweds, that their defenses are breached and their empire rapidly crumbles-they are doomed the moment they lower themselves to the vapid exigencies of romantic love, which they had formerly mocked and exploited - truly, romantic love is death incarnate in this hellish prison of existence.

In Butchers, the fluid hand-held verite camera of earlier Milligan sexploitation epics is conspicuously absent, replaced by relatively stable "traditional" camera set-ups. Yet even within this faux-mainstream mise en scene, Milligan still manages to take some daring aesthetic leaps. Foremost, as mentioned, so much of Butchers consists of a series of endless, claustrophobic two-shots of couples bickering, the effect comes across as highly theatrical, in many ways similar to an avant-garde play. So confining are many of the exchanges in Butchers, the viewer may feel trapped along with the characters, lost in a bleak void of unending travail. These circumscript scenes well serve the scenario, which consistently depicts two souls cornered in an inferno of their own creation, completely lost to the world around them, for as Kevin John Bozelka observes, "Milligan frames so tightly at times that all sense of surrounding disappears."" As well, several times Butchers utilizes the "reverse angle" trick - used so well in The Ghastly Ones- wherein the camera changes position by 180 degrees, effectively reversing the placement of characters, a switch which usually coincides with a notable change in the power dynamics of those depicted. As noted, undulations in the balance of power between characters is an ongoing trope in all Milligan film. Finally, there is the conscious use of gore and shock effects in the service of abstract symbolism, such as the breast-pie used as an emblem of the ritual death of human

procreation, and the (then-novel) use of on-screen vomiting to convey societal condemnation of the villains' acts of butchery and by extension a subtextual condemnation of modern capitalism.

The basic theme of societal collapse is readily carried on in the threadbare aesthetics of Butchers, which captures a decrepit universe that is slimy, tawdry, chintzy, phony and without moral substance. Curiously, Milligan himself is on record as disliking Butchers, calling it "very claustrophobic," an odd statement coming from a master of painting small cinematic canvasses.14 Butchers' stifling claustrophobia is one of its most redeeming features- it eerily captures the essence of the heterosexual experience, in many ways similar to two animals trapped together in a small cage, forced by their confinement to battle, often unto death. Were Butchers a "bigger" film, it would fail completely.

Lastly, Butchers paints such a powerfully negative portrait of humanity largely due to its graphic on-screen violence, which vividly illustrates that the "fruits" of the heterosexual bond are largely that of human carnage. It is this Grand Guignol quality which gives Butchers its largest fan base, and rightly so, for its gore quotient is admirable for the time period. The highly theatrical, almost cartoon-like gore in Butchers (and elsewhere in the Milligan canon) serves simultaneously to satisfy certain exploitation film expectations, while also cleverly augmenting the film's avant-garde pretensions, alluding to Artaud's Theater of Cruelty and of course the Grand Guignol tradition, and is invariably meant to annotate and reinforce the emotional agony suffered by the characters. According to Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Butchers was originally released with an "X" rating, one of the first horror films to achieve that distinction, but was soon edited down and tagged "R" for most drive-in and grindhouse runs.'s According to Walter Gay, the original cut of Butchers contained a scene wherein Tobias "scoops out the bowels of a freshly hacked victim," a scene which did not make it to extant prints, thanks to the notoriously conservative William Mishkin.16 At any rate, Butchers went on to considerable success coupled with another Milligan film, Torture Dungeon, in a now-legendary Mishkin double bill which traveled the grindhouse and drive-in circuits for over a decade, gaining countless disciples along the way.

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Guru, the Mad Monk (1970)

Guru, the Mad Monk is the only film in which Andy Milligan acted as producer, distributor and director (in addition to his usual other ancillary tasks). With his ill-fated Nova International Pictures, he all too soon realized that exhibitors were as crooked as distributors, and he had as much, if not more, difficulty extracting box office receipts from grindhouse theater owners like Chellee Wilson and Bingo Brandt as he had with cheap-jack producers William Mishkin and Jerry Balsam.' Guru, the Mad Monk (henceforth referred to as Monk) does, however, showcase a maturation of Milligan's aesthetic, for it is a strange and beautiful little film. Filmed in 35mm with an anchored camera, Monk does not contain the frenetic joie de vivre of Milligan's late 1960s sexploitation efforts, but replaces them with a stronger screenplay, hyper-real characters and a believable, if grim, mise en scene. In Monk, Milligan still manages to convey the claustrophobia and dread of closed, confining spaces entrapping hysterical characters and revealing horrible situations. In addition, Monk includes the luxury of a lengthy tracking shot, a veritable "epic" moment within Milligan's backyard aesthetic. The only notable absence in Monk is the relatively timid position it takes on gender issues and deviant sexuality. Perhaps this reluctance is due to Milligan's desire to make a name for himself as a producer as well as a director, so he tried not to sabotage himself with sexual excesses which had caused him such notoriety, and some problems, earlier in his career. Monk does contains an adequate quotient of crude gore, but this is well in keeping with grindhouse/drive-in audience and marketplace expectations for the "extreme horror" genre. As well, the crude, cartoon-like gore used to punctuate this simplistic morality tale of fallen royalty, with exposition conveyed via rushed dialogue exchanges, are well in keeping with Milligan's beloved Elizabethan theater aesthetic. Overall, Monk was a potentially conspicuous beginning for Milligan's ill-fated distribution venture, an engaging and at-times still-shocking film which packs a good deal of lurid narrative in its brisk hour-long running time.

Although a delightfully barbaric attack on organized (read: Western) religion (and the 1960s counterculture's equally vacuous fascination with Eastern Mysticism) is certainly a main point, the main theme of Monk will turn out to be the ongoing war between reason and irrationality, between the moral self and the bestial "natural" man, a battle which rages eternally both within the individual and in society at large. This may remind us of the philosophy of rational materialism, brainchild of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who argued that man in his natural state was a brutish, self-centered killer, and only the tentative formation of a mutually-acceptable governing body could keep these bestial impulses in check and forge the foundations of a progressive civilization. Monk, however, states emphatically that the war between the moral self and the primitive beast must be won first within the individual, or it has no chance of succeeding in any proposed Utopian social construct. It is when society's promises to Guru, for example, are broken by the church that the "mad monk" (i.e., betrayed romantic) decides to let his primitive, id-driven self reign, creating a little empire for himself and civilization be damned.

Poster for Guru, the Mad Monk (1970).

In many ways, Monk is remarkably similar to Milligan's Bloodthirsty Butchers; in each, a diabolical, if short-term empire is mounted by an intelligent, manipulative heterosexual couple. Guru and Olga, like Sweeney Todd and Maggie Lovett, are in essence just another male-female duo trying to survive in harsh economic times, and using the very system which has failed

them as the foundation of their own macabre industries. In each film, this economic "royalty" resorts to the manipulation of the ignorant, hungry peasantry towards their own ends, using the figurative and literal "flesh and blood" of the community to attain their own agendas.

A hand-painted sign hangs on the gate-like entrance to a bleak gray brick church: The Lost Souls Church of Mortavia. This allusion to purgatory and mortality sets the scene not as a place of hope and faith, but of death and despair, augmented nicely by the building's grim facade. Two hooded goons drag a helpless young woman to a dungeon deep in the church, tossing her into a small cell. Another person, a young man, also in the dungeon, starts a conversation with her. When the two finally identify each other, it turns out that they are star-crossed lovers Carl (Paul Lieber) and Nadja (Judith Israel), a soap-operatic revelation that fits in well with the overall Milligan milieu.

Nadja tells of being kidnapped by gypsies, and Carl vows to help her escape her fate. As Nadja stands against a barren brick wall, she continues her tale of woe, which includes being violated by the leader of the gypsy pack, becoming pregnant, being discarded on the side of the road, and eventually giving birth to a stillborn infant. The harsh, unforgiving nature of cruel fate is accented by the cold, rough surface of the brick against which Nadja leans for support. Some time later, Nadja was accused of killing her baby, and sentenced to death, an allusion to the Catholic church's notorious witch trials and Inquisition, which dealt monstrously and absolutely with any perceived (or invented) errant behavior, especially on the part of women.

Carl soon seeks an audience with Father Guru (Neil Flanagan), head of this church of "Lost Souls." Carl begs Guru to help Nadja escape her fate, but the clergy reminds the young lad that it is god's will that she be punished. Carl innocently questions the omniscience of a supernatural being who would mete out such barbaric punishment to an innocent, but Guru quickly corrects him, slapping Carl hard across the face and reinforcing the corporal nature of organized religion, the harsh consequence of free thinking in a dogmatic system, and to the essentially sado-masochistic nature of religious institutions, predicated on the dialectic of a stern authority figure doling out stern warnings of transgression and punishment, and a groveling, obedient congregation apparently eager to receive such correction. Guru then changes character dramatically, also in keeping with the schizophrenic, duplicitous nature of

religious personnel, and formulates on the spot a sneaky, and obviously illegal plan which might spare Nadja. The reason for this sudden switch in loyalty soon becomes clear, as Guru states, rather bitterly, "Our church is poor. Mother church has seen fit not to send us enough money to survive on." This description of Guru's corporate headquarters as "Mother church" paints the organized church of the antiquity as a malevolent corporate entity. As well, the allusion to "Mother" fits in well with Milligan's intense dislike of matriarchal-based social systems- although in reality the Catholic Church, which is most likely what Guru's "Mother church" is based on, was invariably, and almost exclusively, owned and operated by males, and functioned largely as an organization determined to harass, punish and execute females. Finally, this reference sets up a dialectic wherein "son" Guru and his "Mother Church" become a partnership clearly drawn along Masochist lines.

Guru continues: "Perhaps that is why we are looked down upon by all Eastern Europe. The lowest of all humanity is sent to us to be executed. The stench of death makes others turn away from us, turn their backs on us." It is now clear that the Lost Souls church takes care of society's human trash, and although it may have at one time had high aspirations as a center for spiritual enlightenment, it has degenerated into little more than a factory for imprisonment, punishment and execution, an early example of systemic population control, and well in keeping with historical records of the Catholic Church's infamous "Inquisitions.'" (In fact) Guru's "death factory" references the secular courts which, during the long centuries haunted by the Inquisition, were assigned the burden of actually exterminating those convicted of blasphemy-the Catholic church legally washed its hands of such affairs, considering the mere fate of their flesh-and-blood enemies unworthy of effort). Guru reveals to Carl that he wants to utilize his only "product," which are the corpses of the executed, and sell some of them to medical schools, in order to fatten the church's lean coffers. As in Bloodthirsty Butchers, here is another cynical example of modern capitalism at its most savage, in which human flesh is reduced to merely another consumer product. Carl reluctantly agrees to this evil partnership, and a satisfied Guru coyly states," Thank god there are many ways to work little miracles," reflecting the relativity of morality in a corrupt social environment.

In order to fetch the potion Guru requests, Carl next visits the mysterious Olga (Jacqueline Webb), who appears to live in a tiny, cloth-draped cave. Olga's

black floral-print gown nicely augments the back "wall" of the domicile, which looks to be a garish pop-art floralprint shower curtain. Strips of randomly-colored fabric hang down in the extreme foreground of the frame, further enhancing the stifling setting. Milligan's ability to create a reckless mise en scene from an absolute minimum of resources is illustrated well here, as Olga's domicile looks like an extension of herself, perhaps a macrocosmic emblem of the spinster's barren womb, in which only evil flowers may bloom. Olga also wears a magnificently tossed-together headpiece which features a mandala-based emblem with possible occult meaning, which connotes either exiled royalty or a practitioner of the dark arts. To verify his story, Olga looks deeply into Carl's eyes, and confidently claims that he is telling the truth, which suggests that the strange woman is either extremely intuitive, or perhaps supernatural (if not outright daft). Her admonition, "You can't be too careful these days," echoing an earlier sentiment by Guru, suggests that civilization is "already" falling apart (or as Milligan is more likely stating) you can never trust anyone, anytime, anywhere).

As the two discuss Carl's predicament via an excruciatingly tight two-shot, Olga reveals her own agenda - she needs blood, for her "experiments." Olga poses as a witch or high priestess, but as events will reveal, and common sense dictates, she is actually a vampire. Olga wants Carl to further compromise his morals by letting her have her way with the executed persons before he whisks them off to the medical societies for Guru's benefit. According to Milligan's dim view of humanity, Guru and Olga form the "perfect" archetype of the diabolical heterosexual couple, a blood-sucking "mommy" and a homicidal "daddy," each dedicated to the callous extraction of the life essence from their "children," i.e., society, for their own selfish gain. Olga bullies Carl into agreeing to the ghoulish bargain, sealing the agreement by poking his finger and extracting blood, the only element she respects. During this ceremony, Olga again restates, "You can't trust people these days," apparently a key Milligan sentiment, as it echoes throughout all of his films, from Vapors onward.

Soon, Guru enters his church in full liturgical regalia, captured via an impressive tracking shot, a startling anomaly in the threadbare Milligan universe. The cavernous room is lit primarily by candles, as a Gregorian chant plays on the soundtrack, and an impressively realistic verisimilitude is created here. Standing at the pulpit, Guru chants, "This is the house of God - all present, acknowledge!," bullying the assembled congregation into intellectual

blackmail. Immediately after gushing, "God is Love," Guru proceeds to dispatch two prisoners to eternity by stabbing them in the eye with a flaming poker. This is a hilariously heavy-handed, if accurate, comment on the schizophrenic and brutal hypocrisy of the historical Catholic Church, especially during the time period vaguely suggested, which preached the love of Jesus Christ while destroying any and all perceived enemies with psychopathic cruelty. Yet as promised, Guru spares poor Nadja the hideous, flaming "Brand of God," giving her instead the potion which will render her comatose. (Milligan may have been inspired here by Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet, in which the young heroine is given a similar potion to simulate death, with tragic results.)

The executions for the day accomplished, a nervous Carl follows Guru out of the church. There is a brief, one-second shot of Carl stepping onto the train of Guru's raiment, an act which rips it, making a clearly audible sound. This moment is an exciting editorial conceit on Milligan's part, as the unscripted gaffe is used to subliminally foreshadow Guru's downfall - the clergyman has been forced, via his accruing moral lethargy, to conspire with lowly peasants far beneath him in social status, an understandable but fateful move which will undermine the great executioner in short order. In the back of the church, the unfortunates who have been sentenced and punished are, for reasons not made entirely clear, subjected to even further tortures at the hands of Guru's hooded flunkies. A woman's hands are chopped off; a mental feeble is stabbed in both eyes; a young soldier is beheaded. The unneeded, gratuitous violence inflicted on these persons serve a dual purpose here. Firstly, it satisfies Monk's need for scenes of extreme violence, in keeping with its promise to the grindhouse crowd for such thrills. In the exploitation genre, violence need not be not justified by narrative, and indeed has a particular charm when existing for its own sake, as it then thrusts the presentation into the realm of pure spectacle, one of exploitation film's most profound functions. Yet this extraordinary violence does also serve the narrative of Monk, as it punctuates, with brutal efficacy, the homicidal psychological agenda of organized religion, the obsessive overkill with which entrenched dogmatic institutions attempt to purge any perceived "sin" and eradicate "sinners," which invariably (and conveniently) always turn out to be critics and rivals of the corporation in question. The mass execution scene also boasts an uncanny power, simply because it occurs in such a grim setting. This "back yard" of the church is gray,

barren and desolate - one might even be tempted to say it is "without soul." So odd is the lighting in the scene, it is even difficult to tell if the setting is really inside or outside, and if it takes place during daytime or nighttime. Here, Milligan has managed to create a believable neo-realist purgatory, a brick-and-mortar inferno where unfortunate souls are destined to receive their final, horrifying sentence.

After the executioners have dragged the corpses away, Olga enters the gloomy dungeon, and licks the victims' blood off the chopping block, a gruesome act of personal degradation which illustrates her weakness of moral character, reduced to base acts of animal lust. The scene also introduces the notion of religious allegory to Monk. All the hapless prisoners who are executed at the hands of the Church are clearly innocents, guilty of nothing more than a petty legal infraction, but surely not deserving of their gruesome fate. They are therefore easily seen as martyrs, and thus aligned with this diabolical Church's founder, Jesus Christ, another purported innocent who was killed for being a dangerous outsider to the prevailing political regime. The victims' flesh and blood are thus symbolic of those of Christ, a revelation which makes Guru's exploitation of their bodies for personal gain an act of sheer evil, an absolute political assault against his employer. Similarly, as Olga is figuratively lapping up the blood of Christ when she pathetically licks the execution floor, she becomes entirely demonic, using the sacred fluid of life for her own egotistic continuation.

Elsewhere, Guru and Carl carry on their dangerous manipulation of Nadja into a state of half-life. The presence of a comatose female in Monk is a chimera which seems to diminish the heterosexual female, making her a powerless, inert object, while simultaneously turning her into an almost supernatural figure, bridging the world of flesh and the world of spirit, immune to each yet perhaps influencing both (and perhaps another reference to a similar plot point in Romeo & Juliet). Guru soon commands Carl to run errands for him - the "mad monk" now has the peasant Carl completely under his domination, a socioeconomic servitude similar to Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett's exploitation of their underlings in Bloodthirsty Butchers. In both films, battle between groups is largely drawn along class lines- authority figures run roughshod over mere citizens, entrepreneurs demand unerring loyalty from their employees. The villains in both films should, by appointment or economic savvy, be relatively rich, but it seems they have never been able to make their

positions work for them, which is why they need to summon the energies of those poorer than they in order to extract whatever wealth they can from the community before decimating it.

Perhaps in exchange for his manipulative treatment of Carl, Guru proceeds to share with the poor waif his moral philosophy, as a loving father might bequeath his accrued wisdom to an adored son: "I have learned, in this mortal life of ours, that it is each man for himself. Oh, I preach that God takes care of those who believe in him, but I've discovered that all my years of believing haven't helped me one bit." This shocking revelation of moral turpitude not only paints Guru as a spiritual man who has lost his faith, but as a hypocrite and charlatan of the most despicable kind, a cold, calculating phony who will perform any misdeed, or create any fabrication, to achieve his own ends. As Guru further intones, "I preach one thing, and continue believing another - self survival! You will do well to remember this," one can almost hear the voice of Milligan himself, imparting his own dark thoughts on "this mortal world" to his grindhouse audience, many of whom surely knew of whence he spoke. This brutal philosophy of Social Darwinism, of survival of the fittest (i.e., the most cunning and cutthroat) is intrinsic to the films of Andy Milligan, animating the actions of many if not most of his main characters, although rarely articulated as eloquently as in Guru's proclamations.

The other side of the coin to this moral lassitude is seen in the scene which follows, as Guru prunes flowers in the church garden, while his obedient servant Igor (Jack Spencer) genuflects to his master. Igor is a deformed hunchback and hapless imbecile, and Guru clearly despises him - as he grabs Igor's face roughly with his hand, Guru states cynically, "I can talk to you, and talk to you, and you just look up to me with that stupid smile of yours." The world-weary Guru feels nothing but contempt for his subordinates, and by extension for his congregation and all of society. Yet there is some feeling for Igor buried deep inside, as Guru concedes: "Maybe god knew how desolate and forsaken this place was when he gave you to me, to talk to, to keep me from going out of my mind." As Guru is a certifiable lunatic, this statement has a curious irony to it, yet the tender affections telegraphed by the dismissive remark does suggest that Guru still bears enough human emotion to feel loneliness, and thus gratitude for companionship, even from such a lowly vessel as Igor. Yet the forces of cruelty and sadism overrule Guru's better moments, as the mad master taunts poor Igor by daring to suggest that the comatose Nadja

might love him. When the pathetic hunchback, who loves unconditionally but has never been loved in return, dares to hope thus, Guru goes in for the kill: "You idiot! You were never meant to love anyone! You remain to serve me and only me, you understand?"

Guru and Igor comprise a textbook Milligan relationship: a stern paternal master and a weak, feminine subservient, engaged in a mutually dependent relationship highlighted by ongoing verbal and physical abuse, and with all the earmarks of sado-masochistic ritual. Their bond is especially intriguing in that it seems neither party sought the other out, but were tossed together by happenstance (or perhaps an act of god) as commented by the sarcastic Guru). These mismatched forces all but randomly collided, yet the pair seem wellmatched in their mutual desire for punishment and suffering. This may satisfy some observers, such as the previously discussed Giles Deleuze, who maintained that the fateful meeting of the sadistic and the masochistic individual may not imply the psychological synchronicity attributed to such liaisons by persons such as Freud, but is more readily a fortuitous coincidence which happily also well serves two diametrically opposed personalities.'

Guru's complex, if mentally unstable personality is illustrated in the following scene, the heart of Monk and perhaps one of Milligan's most successful single sequences, which brings the theatrical tradition to the fore. Guru stands in the church foyer, looking at himself in a mirror, while holding the bouquet of daisies he has clipped from the garden in the execution field. The audience sees two faces of Guru, a man figuratively split in two by mental imbalance and warring ethical considerations. Guru now speaks, apparently with himself, in a classic exchange which represents the dialectical moral forces of man, always at battle within. Metaphorically speaking, it is essentially a conversation between basic concepts of "Good" and "Evil," as expressed through the language of a split personality:

GOOD GURU: “You really should be nicer to Igor — he does love you.”
EVIL GURU: “You go to hell!”
GOOD GURU: “Do you know who you’re talking to?”
EVIL GURU: “Yes! I hate you and your pious ways — why don’t you leave me alone?”
GOOD GURU: “I can’t trust you alone. I can’t leave you alone. If I don’t watch over you, you’ll destroy us both.”
EVIL GURU: “You go to Hell!”
GOOD GURU: “If I do, I’ll have to take you with me.”
EVIL GURU: “You’ll never get rid of me! I’m getting stronger. Every year, I get stronger, and stronger, and one of these days, I won’t need you anymore!”
GOOD GURU: “You can’t get rid of me — you need me. Without me you can’t continue in your evil ways. You need me to cover up your crimes. Without me, you’ll have no one to say mass for all those unfortunate souls in front of the eyes of god, and everyone.”
EVIL GURU: “I’ll find a way, and when I do, I’ll kill you! I won’t need you anymore.”
GOOD GURU: “You can’t get rid of me.”
EVIL GURU: “You’re afraid now, aren’t you?

This startling soliloquy, which amounts to a philosophic discourse running vaguely along Aristotelian lines, illustrates in crudely elementary terms that eternal battle of Mankind between the moral (social) and immoral (personal) elements of his psyche, and which will comprise the basic theme of Monk. So far, the forces of evil appear to be winning, as witness the corrupt death-centered community sponsored by Guru and Olga, and their trail of blood-stained corpses. Evil Guru even observes that "he" is getting "stronger, and stronger," implying that over time, the forces of self-interest will win over moral considerations. Yet Guru's moral representative makes an interesting point - it is only behind the cloak of righteousness granted by Guru's official or "public" self that Evil may unleash its misanthropic plots unfettered - or as Good Guru bluntly reveals to Evil Guru, "You need me to cover up your crimes." It is distinctly the facade of social service which allows dogmatic, ultimately antisocial institutions like organized religion and business corporations (for instance), to perpetuate their fraud upon generations of trusting (and/or powerless) innocents. This dichotomy within Man, always in struggle and never achieving stasis, most often is seen in the garden-variety hypocrite who, tongue in cheek, declares, "Do as I say, not as I do." Yet forces both internal and external work tirelessly to keep deleterious individual and collective self-interest in check, at least in theory; the forces of morality accessible in Man must be forever watchful of the tendency towards solipsistic self-interest which, when systemic, threatens to become that colloquial philosophical concept known as "Evil." It is for these reasons that Good Guru can confidently inform his malefic alter ego, "You can't get rid of me." The

latter part of this scene is composed of a tight two-shot featuring Guru and Guru speaking towards stage left, in fact appearing to speak directly to the bunch of flowers they hold. Here, Milligan even bothers to change focus between the two faces as they alternately speak, a small touch but one which verifies that the filmmaker had conscious notions of this shot being worthy of considerable (for him) care in planning and execution.

Upstairs, Nadja paces her cell and ponders her fate. Igor arrives to bring her some food, also providing a rare opportunity for (intentional) comic relief- as he sets down her tray, he apologizes for the limited repast: "I hope you like horse - it's all we have." In an attempt to befriend Igor, Nadja asks for his life story, and he tells a soap-operatic tale of woe. Igor reveals that he was an abandoned orphan, who was discovered and nurtured back to (some semblance of) health by Guru. Considering Igor's hideous physical and mental abnormalities, it becomes an academic point as to whether the child was abused by his original caretakers, or suffered under the harsh paternal whip of his new "Father," Guru - in either case, the unwanted child of humanity is exemplified starkly by this twisted unfortunate, a child of Man raised by its basest members, a pariah who can contribute nothing to society but for a slavish servitude to his torturous "caretakers."4

Igor soon delivers a letter to Guru, which announces that "the holy father from the mainland is coming to visit," and bringing with him a young acolyte to replace Guru. An enraged Guru burns the letter and, reverting to his "evil" self, restates his earlier vow: "You'll never get rid of me." Guru then takes out his frustrations on Igor, whom he pummels mercilessly, illuminating the dark connection between madness and Sadean punishment. Soon, the emissaries from church headquarters arrive, and Guru greets them wearing his fancy "brocade robes." Guru is soon complaining about the lack of funds coming from the church, an embarrassing faux pas which causes Archbishop Kopel (Frank Echols) to scold Guru, "Already you're giving ... a very bad impression of the way we run the business of our lord," a statement which underscores that this religion racket is, indeed, a business, and an apparently a cheap one at that. After learning of the horrible violence inflicted on those sent here, the young priest Father Polanski (Gerald Jacuzzo, billed as "Jeremy Brooks") asks whether these poor souls, who have had their eyes cut out or their hands dismembered, are given remedial medical treatment. Kopel haughtily declares that the church doesn't have the money to offer both "spiritual treatment" and

free health care, mocking the utter hypocrisy of the historical church (and its modern incarnation) the multinational corporation), whose selfish business models dictate the performance only of those services which immediately benefit them economically, leaving the continuing welfare of the populace to the community at large, or to government institutions. Becoming weary, the pale-faced Kopel begs to continue the conversation inside, stating, "The sun and I do not get along well," a marvelous tongue-in-cheek remark which positions the pontiff, as representative of the church, as just another blood-sucking ghoul, like Olga and other gardenvariety vampires. The remark also clearly suggests that this cynical, penny-pinching executive, this supposed keeper of the flame of Jesus Christ, is as antithetical to the principles of his supposed role model as he could possibly be - the black hearts of these opportunistic devils would surely "not get along well" with the merciful, peaceable dictates of a loving god.

In the church foyer, Kopel espies vampiress Olga skulking in the corner, and chastises Guru for his continued lecherous indiscretions, which apparently threaten the reputation of the church more than the systemic genocide performed on local unfortunates. Kopel suggests that Guru might relocate his mistress elsewhere, but Guru pleads for Olga's case: "Ever since she was bitten by that ... animal, she hasn't been the same." Guru apparently has real feelings for this woman who, through some unfortunate accident of fate, was "bitten" by Evil and has become its devoted servant, as has the mad monk. A frustrated Kopel finally informs Guru that he is being replaced as of today, and the mad monk, now cornered like a rat, viciously strangles his boss.

Polanski soon encounters Olga, who holds a serving tray with a large object sitting upon it, covered in a linen napkin. Laughing maniacally, Olga summons the young priest to follow her into the church proper, where she unveils the repast - it is Archbishop Kopel's freshly severed head. Olga's laughter may be amusement at this gruesome mockery of "the body of Christ," one of the inviolable tenets of her mate's church, so easily contradicted by the church's real actions and intentions. Olga attacks the stunned Polanski, and the corporate threat to Olga and Guru's domestic happiness appears vanquished. In the upstairs dungeon, the desperate Guru, realizing he has nothing to lose, starts pawing Nadja and suggests they become lovers. Nadja is repulsed, but the mad monk forces himself on the virgin. Her screams bring Igor, who finally gains the courage to battle his evil master, but Guru prevails, and drags his traitorous

employee downstairs. There, Olga and Guru nail the poor hunchback Igor to the wall, in another defiant mockery of the suffering of "their lord."

After killing their surrogate "son," Guru informs Olga that he is leaving Mortavia without her, but vows to call for her when he has found a new safe haven. Olga knows, however, that Guru has no intentions of continuing their relationship - like so many failed middle-aged men, he wants to dump the woman who aided his success, in order to run around with a younger woman. Guru states his case succinctly-"I don't want you with me. I have no further use for you"- and Olga responds, "It's that girl, isn't it?" Guru and Olga now represent the archetypal Milligan heterosexual couple-bickering, conniving, in conspiracy against the world but ultimately treacherous even to each other. As Guru attempts to leave, Olga tries to stab him with a knife, but the mad monk overpowers her, and Olga ends up stabbing herself to death, an expedient demise to a character rendered obsolete by circumstance.

Guru is cornered by the others, and rushes upstairs to escape. Guru manages to stab Igor to death before he is entwined in the rope of the church bell, and is hung by the neck, swinging wildly back and forth as his evil life finally expires. This death is most conspicuous, firstly for the fact that it is manifested by a symbolic implement of the church - the bell - which was intended to lure the innocent and the faithful to their spiritual reward, and was used finally to vanquish one who had so cynically abused this trust. Simultaneously, the death clearly aligns itself with Masochistic principles, in which acts of physical suspension connote erotic deference to a stern matriarchal figure - Guru's death is in many ways a ritual offering to "Mother Church," giving the act rich psycho-sexual meaning - Guru has, in effect, sacrificed his evil self to his corporate mother, and may have thus achieved a final sexual release via auto-erotic strangulation. In a hilarious coda, Carl and Nadja walk calmly away from the church, and a wanderer approaches, asking where he might find Father Guru. Carl points back to the church, and the lost soul hobbles towards the church entrance, to meet his fate - as in Bloodthirsty Butchers, although the hegemony of the previous heterosexual regime has been extinguished, as long as the human race continues, the cycle of torture, death and sexual deceit will continue, forever and ever, amen.

The setting of Monk is interesting, as it cleverly modifies historical incident with some wildly fictional adjuncts. The "island" of "Mortavia" (which is,

curiously, easily reached from the mainland by foot) is fictional, but may allude to the historical region of Moravia, situated in Central Europe in the Czech Republic, with its largest border on Poland. One of Moravia's notable historical moments occurred during the infamous "Habsburg Epoch," which began circa 1526 and featured an increasing animosity between the Catholic and the Protestant sectors, a political instability vaguely mirrored in various confrontations in Monk; eventually, an independent Moravian Church was formed in response to increasingly harsh Catholic dictates. Likewise, Guru sends his flunky Carl to "Rogoznia," another fictional construct but which may allude to Rogaznica, a small village in Croatia, on the Dalmatian coast, and today a popular tourist attraction. Further, Guru and others mention more than once that Mortavia is a part of both "Middle Europe" and "Eastern Europe," confirming that the story indeed takes place in these well-documented regions. As to the time period, the early 16th century seems a fair guess until Archbishop Kopel informs Father Polanski that the Mortavian Church received its greatest boost in involuntary "membership" after "the great plague of '38." Although Kopel declines to mention the century, one can confidently assume that the "great plague" he speaks of was the infamous "Black Death," the cataclysmic world pandemic which wiped out a huge portion of the population of Europe and elsewhere. This menacing blight peaked in Europe circa 1348, so it may be thus concluded that Monk probably takes place somewhere during the mid-section of the 14th century. Furthermore, the plague's radical reduction of the population had a dramatic impact on the Catholic Church, which saw its congregation, and thus its income, decimated practically overnight. In order to compensate for this loss of "product," the Church embarked on an aggressive campaign to root out and persecute perceived "heretics" such as freethinkers, foreigners and outsiders (and seizing the assets of these "enemies of god"), an historical fact which merges seamlessly into the basic scenario of Monk.

The relationship between Guru and Olga is complex and problematic - they seem to be the elders of the community, yet also in conspiracy with each other against society in toto- a dialectic compounded by the fact that actors Flanagan and Webb were in fact, married in real life, adding a discernible tension, sexual and otherwise, between them. Ultimately, however, Guru and Olga are revealed to be just another one of Milligan's warring, conniving heterosexual couples, as noted quite similar to Sweeney Todd and Maggie Lovett in Bloodthirsty Butchers. While the two have apparent positions of high authority, and hold

great sway over their inferiors in the community, they are ultimately felled by their own superiors (Mother Church and Father Dracula?), and through their vapid domestic squabbling reveal themselves to be petit bourgeois middle management, at best. Their tragic bond underscores a cherished, recurring Milligan theme - how the love between men and women tends to unleash the evil powers within each, to their own and society's eventual detriment. There is also some playful gender confusion evident in the pair. Guru is clearly an emasculated, feminine male, what with his ornate costuming and his frustrated obedience to "mother church." As mentioned, this emasculation of Guru merges with the view that he is the obedient son of a stern maternal figure, the classical Masochist paradigm. As well, Olga is a highly masculine female - in her roles as priestess, hypnotist and vampire, she assumes traditionally male models of hunter, predator, overlord. Olga is by definition a Sadistic creature, perhaps herself an obedient servant of an evil patriarchal legacy of male vampires (aka Dracula).

Yet the main thrust of Monk is a heavy-handed insistence on the relative personal ethics needed for survival in a hostile, predatory environment. Guru is a "mad monk" not merely because he has abused his position of authority, and his (relatively) "absolute" power over others has made him demented but because Guru is essentially a good man betrayed by his species. The young clergy likely entered the service of his lord with the best of intentions, but soon found that the institution and the community which sponsored him were as duplicitous and dangerous as the dark forces he was hired to do battle with. The true man of faith, the quintessential "Guru" in reference to the Eastern Mystics, would then reject the world and its ways, refusing to debase himself by participation in the evil workings of man, remaining pure by withdrawal into spiritual exercise. Alas, Guru is not strong enough to achieve this act of unearthly courage, so he becomes-like most of mankinda conniving hypocrite who brays arrogantly, "I preach one thing, and continue believing another - self survival!" Yet the conquest of the moral spirit in Man is not as easy as all that, and Monk chronicles, cleverly if fitfully, the moral self at war eternal with the fleshly forces which taunt and deceive him, forever trying to trip up his best self and drag him down to the level of the purely bestial, where brute survival is the only rule. Again, Hobbes' rational materialism is alluded to, in that "natural" man is by definition a war-like creature, and can only be tamed by strong social forces within, and without. In Monk, however, this battle of good vs. evil is

only won by default, with the struggling creatures' demise due to intervention by divine law. Left to his own devices, Milligan states in Monk and elsewhere, Man always defers to his lower self, which wins the battle every time.

It may be thus darkly ironic that another strong theme in Monk is "the church as industrial machine," a condemnation of business enterprise which seems uncannily self-reflexive in regards to Milligan's contentious relationship with producers and distributors. Milligan obviously had high hopes for his ill-fated Nova International Pictures, a short-lived joint venture with Phil Todaro, the scoundrel who had previously run off with prints of Milligan's inaugural film, Vapors, making a tidy sum off illegal showings of it on the West Coast.' According to Tim Lucas, Monk was filmed in six days at St. Peter's Church in Manhattan, with a "comparatively lavish" budget of $20,000.6 However, Jimmy McDonough states Monk's budget at closer to $11,000.' The opening credits for Monk are quite elaborate, and include some fairly effective calligraphy, a sign that Milligan and company spent more on Monk than on previous projects. (Milligan also takes four "fake" credits in Monk, as well as those of his own: for editing, sets, sound and lighting.) According to Jimmy McDonough, however, Milligan had to physically remove prints of Monk from area grindhouses, and one can imagine that extracting box office receipts was at least as difficult. Andy Milligan, like his creation Father Guru, may be seen by history as a good man forced by circumstances to resort to less-than-noble means in order to secure funds and services which had been coldly purloined by others.

Guru, the Mad Monk was released to theaters in December, 1970, the bottom of a double bill with The Body Beneath. Boxoffice, one of the few trade publications which reviewed the film, stated:

> Intended strictly to fill out the program, "Guru" is incredibly short (62 minutes) and does little to hold up its end. Andy Milligan, switching from sex films to his own distribution outfit as a producer of horror flicks, apparently had some ideas left over from the more interesting "The Body Beneath." Both use the vampire legend and the hunchbacked servant, halfcrazed but really humane. The Production has good color photography by Milligan, who also directed and wrote the screenplay. Street noises have been cleverly drowned out by the pounding surf, to give the impression of the story's taking place on an island. Although set in the Middle Ages, the dialog is modern and a

contemporary drainpipe stands out. Some lines are funny, unintentional or not, as is mad Neil Flanagan's conversation with himself to show he has a split personality. Flanagan, an Off Broadway actor, heads the cast, notably unimpressive except for the improbably named Judy Israel, a good heroine.'

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The Body Beneath (1970)

The Body Beneath is one of Andy Milligan's greatest achievements-with it, he comes close to creating a bona-fide art-horror film. The Body Beneath (henceforth referred to as Body) is a largely effective, surprisingly atmospheric Gothic horror piece, which maintains its structural and narrative integrity throughout. It was a quantum leap for the filmmaker, and it is unfortunate that even this- possibly his best film overall -was relegated to the grindhouse ghetto, where critical attention was scant, and the undiscerning audience likely passed it off as just another generic entertainment. Sadly, Body was to be Milligan's last effort in his ill-fated partnership with Cinemedia Films, due to a falling out with one of the participants.' Taking the finished film with him when he returned to the U.S., Milligan used it as part of a double bill with Guru, the Mad Monk, to launch his own short-lived distribution outfit, Nova International Pictures.' The Nova double bill floundered in the overcrowded exploitation marketplace, and the prints were eventually stolen and exploited by unscrupulous sub-distributors, insuring yet again that Milligan saw virtually no monetary rewards for his creative efforts.'

Yet Body stands as testament to how engaging a film Milligan could make if he really tried. Body seems, first and foremost, the product of a creative person attempting to impress a new backer, showing the kind of product that could be made for a modest budget. Body has the look and feel of a much bigger-budgeted production, boasting atmospheric locations, competent camera-work and lavish costuming. However, one could never mistake Body for the work of anybody else, for several Milligan trademarks are still there, even to the detriment of the overall product: long dialogue exchanges; at-times tedious exposition; ridiculously lurid backstory revelations; and an unerringly dark view of humanity. And as with Bloodthirsty Butchers (which was, to be precise, likely filmed afterwards), Body is a highly critical examination of the heterosexual social construct, how demonic couples poison society, and betray each other on their downward spiral to destroy the world. As well, Body is a

simplistic but effective condemnation of entrenched patriarchy, its multigenerational conspiracy to retain omniscience and to corrupt society, imprisoning new generations into its malevolent plans, and most specifically conscripting young females to be the suppliers of blood and babies for its continuance. There is also a good deal of conflict depicted between social classes, primarily servants and masters, and although these conflicts are kept within traditional narrative boundaries, not extrapolated to allegorical lengths, still one can almost hear the hint of Genet's The Maids in some of these struggles, especially when one of the obedient housemaids turns on her master, successfully igniting her downfall. In sum, these are all trademark Milligan themes, and give Body the certifiable signature of the artist.

The setting of Body is vague, perhaps deliberately so- although it appears to take place in modern-day London, there is overlapping evidence of earlier times-from the late 1900s to the World War II era -which playfully intermingle, creating a temporal netherworld which seems consciously designed to maintain a mystique of historical obscurity. Body takes place in an indefinable, overtly anachronistic purgatory, meant to evoke the universality of its themes, and another nod to the theatrical tradition whence Milligan emerged. Also interesting is the mention of real-life locations in Body (Hempstead Heath Estate, Highgate Cemetery), two places where the film was actually shot, a bit of self-reflexivity which adds a neo-realist authenticity to the piece.4 The basic template of Body is that of Gothic horror, as it is concerned with a family of vampires, and was likely bankrolled in an attempt to compete in a marketplace filled, at that moment, with television programs like Dark Shadows, and theatrical films like the successful Hammer period tales of Dracula, Frankenstein, and other assorted horror workhorses. Body does work as Gothic horror, but just barely-it is far more effective as part of a nascent genre dubbed "art-horror," wherein a horror story is used to mount somewhat abstract tales which depict universal themes of psychological travail and societal conflict. Even the pretentious title is a clue that Milligan was consciously attempting to create an "art-horror" piece, and although his own obsessions and prejudices do muddy the waters somewhat, it can be said he was overall successful in the attempt. Soon, European filmmakers such as Dario Argento, Jesus Franco and Jean Rollin would turn the genre into a critically-noticed artform, and one wonders whether Milligan was, yet again, just a bit ahead of his time.

In Body, Milligan is in full force as the proverbial "one-man band," adding five additional credits to his usual writing/directing one - lights, sets, costumes, sound, editor - and one can thus confidently view Body as the work of a single auteur. And Body starts off with a bang, as three witch-like demons assault a grieving woman at an ancient grave-site. The use of a real location (Highgate Cemetery), with its exquisite foliage and decrepit tombstones introduces Body's anachronistic look, a genius stroke on Milligan's part, which takes a neo-realistic setting and turns it into something abstract, theatrical and timeless. The demon-women, dressed in garish blue, green and red, immediately come across as fantasy characters, destined to fill a highly symbolic role in Body, as similar characters have, such as Magda in Torture Dungeon and Corky in Bloodthirsty Butchers. The mourner's red dress may also suggest that she, overall, represents Fallen Man. This opening sequence features a curious audio effect -the sound of four crow-caws, repeated several times- that surely constitute a prophecy of doom, as well as recalling the supremacy of natural law over the feeble blueprints of man.

The main thrust of the plot involves a most engaging villain - an arrogant fop/cum clergyman named Algernon Ford (Gavin Reed) in a marvelous performance) and his wife, Alicia (Susan Heard), who have mysteriously "arrived" in London, ostensibly to open up a new church. Events reveal the pair to be vampires, an almost comical plot point which nonetheless creates the opportunity for some amusing, if heavy-handed religious allegory. The diabolical patriarch solicits three young female Fords- Susan, Candace and Anna - in order to first extract their blood for their daily continuance, and then hopefully to exploit their fertile wombs as breeding grounds for a future generation of vampire-monsters. This plight of "sisters" in struggle against a malevolent parenttyrant may remind us of similar Milligan excursions such as Seeds of Sin and The Ghastly Ones, and the template will be well-utilized again in Legacy of Blood. Alas, as the three female blood relatives in Body never actually meet, there is no chance for solidarity between sisters, and thus, their doom is sealed.

With his servant Spool (Berwick Kaler) and wife Alicia (Susan Heard) assisting, dying patriarch Algernon Ford (Gavin Reed) receives a much-needed blood transfusion to artificially prolong his reign of terror, in Andy Milligan's polished and impressive The Body Beneath (1970) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Ford is an arrogant, even sadistic taskmaster, an effective if simplistic symbol of entrenched patriarchy, especially as expressed by the stern British father figure. His wife, Alicia, however, seems to be either pathologically shy or a mute, in either instance a good portrayal of the repressed/ oppressed female in the traditional heterosexual relationship which contains a dominant patriarch. Rationalizing his partner's lack of speech early in the film, Ford states, "My wife is not very demonstrative - she confides everything to me and I explain to others," merely another way of saying that this woman has no voice - all of her supposed opinions are conveniently filtered through the male - assuring that all such communication subscribes to authorized male dictates. As with the intended use of the young women for breeding purposes, this dynamic is well in keeping with the cardinal rule of phallocentric society: women are useful only

as tools to serve maledom. It may even be significant that Milligan chose to name his patriarchal villain "Ford." The viewer may thus recall Henry Ford, who is credited not only with the modification of the new-fangled "automobile" for mass marketing, but is considered the father of the modern assembly line, wherein innumerable replicas could be cheaply and quickly produced using a mathematically-calculated combination of time, labor and resources. This "mass production" which Ford developed into a veritable artform may serve as metaphor for the "Reverend" Ford's desire to "mass produce" future generations of his own brand of "Ford Vampire" in perpetuity, the forced breeding of his female family members the essential catalyst in this diabolical assembly line.

The tyrant Ford and his acquiescent wife represent a most intriguing revision on the familiar Milligan archetype of the "bad mommy and daddy" who rule their children (biological and societal) and other assorted underlings with stern ferocity. As noted, Ford is a died-in-the-wool misogynist, strictly of the "old school," where the female's place is in the service of the male: "Punctuality is an excellent thing in a woman." One amusing scene depicts Ford and wife resting, like the dead, on top of their bed; the image juxtaposes a notion of the pair as ghoulish somnambulist corpses alongside a rather silly portrayal of the duo as an average suburban couple taking a midday nap, making them at once common and obscure. Later, as they drink a cocktail of blood, one of their guests inquires what they are drinking, and Ford, tongue fully in cheek, mutters, "Tomato juice!"-here, the Fords are suburban impostors, hiding their perfidy (blood drinking) behind the vapid trappings of bourgeois culture (afternoon cocktails). Likewise, Alicia's omnipresent knitting needles are props designed to paint the inarticulate female as the archetypal "good Christian woman," a middle-class paragon of servitude who pursues the "womanly arts" for her mate while deferring all things socio-political to the whims of her acknowledged master; yet these same innocuous implements serve the woman's dark alter ego well, acting as effective weapons against targeted foes.

As the Fords reveal themselves to be representatives of a long line of vampires, their role in continuing a patriarchal social system becomes evermore clear. Ford periodically laments the need for subterfuge, the apparently tiresome effort involved with impersonating normal society while conspiring against it, illustrating a common trope in the cinema of Milligan, in which a couple ostensibly in the service of society is actually one of its most fearsome enemies.

According to Algernon, the Ford "family tree" goes back to Roman times- a conspicuous reference, suggesting that the Fords are merely the last in a long line of historical tyrants, carrying on the tradition inherited from kings and emperors. The Fords' daily blood transfusions, like that of Claris in Seeds of Sin, confirm the couples' essentially parasitic nature, forcing continuation of their unnatural life solely through the blood (sacrifice) of others' energies, as well as alluding to certain "blood rituals" of the religion the couple recklessly exploit. Yet the most diabolical aspect of the male Ford, Algernon, is his brazen impersonation of clergy. Unlike Father Guru, Ford is not a faithful man, crushed by betrayal - he is a cynical opportunist, a con man of the most heinous kind, as he fully intends to cunningly exploit the faith of others towards his own ends. His sole "human" confession-"It's strange; I have no soul, yet I feel compassion"-thus suggests either a complete delusion on his part, or just perhaps a rare moment of insight by a soul still partially tormented by evil deeds rendered over the course of millennia.

The Fords' agenda, first alluded to, becomes crystal clear as the film progresses. These monsters, ensconced in Highgate Cemetery since 98 B.C., need their daily transfusions of blood in order to retain their social hegemony. (The reference to Highgate Cemetery, an centuries-old graveyard outside of London, drapes an overtly "Victorian" patina on the Fords.) As it turns out, inter-racial breeding has weakened the Ford bloodline of its former purity, and Algernon envisions a new clan of Ford "Superbeings," an allusion to various racial programs including eugenics, exogamy, and the notorious Catholic notion of the "mixed marriage," all of which attempted to manipulate free choice in breeding toward the ultimate goal of a specific, designed genetic legacy. (Ford is clearly pegged as both elitist and racist with a telling comment early on: "Ireland is a lovely place to leave from...") As Ford gushes on that, "Every one of them will be godlike in appearance," it is easy to see he is fantasizing about a new "master race," another auspicious parallel to the agenda of modern patriarchal clans. For this nefarious goal, of course, women are valuable, as mandatory breeders of men's babies, and as (equally mandatory) suppliers of fresh blood. The emphasis on "mandatory" reveals that the enlistment of both of these functions from women amounts to little more than systemic rape -women are to be used as a obligatory tool of male supremacist social systems.

In the main, Body unfolds largely through dialogue exchanges between several disparate couples, similar to the structure of Bloodthirsty Butchers. As

all of their problems are generic in nature, their conversations reflect universal truths about the heterosexual paradigm rather than idiosyncrasies about particular individuals. The primary focus is on Susan Ford (Jackie Skarvellis) and her partner Paul Donati (Richmond Ross). We are introduced to this pair as they have sex. Sex is a universal, timeless act, one which refuses historical placement, and although these scenes exist primarily to titillate the grindhouse audience, they paint Susan and Paul as standard-issue breeders, a notion clarified as the two discuss their plans for a baby apparently on the way. During this scene, Susan repeatedly tells Paul that she loves her, yet Paul refuses to return the favor, revealing a vaguely sado-masochistic dynamic at work, virtually a sacrament in the Milligan universe. Post-coitus, Paul coos to Susan, "I know you like a book -I can even read between the lines," implying that this male is in complete control of the female, and is also privy to any attempted treachery, a belief which gives the man in this partnership almost supernatural power over his mate (and perhaps a curious alliance with his eventual nemesis) Ford)

The second couple is Anna Ford (Susan Clark) and her husband Graham (Colin Gordon). Anna is the woman who was accosted by the harpies in the opening scene, and after the fateful encounter, she appears evermore cold to Graham, who immediately notices the change in her: "Your hands are like ice." Anna, emotionally distant due to being taken over by the dark forces, looks out the window and moans, "I wish it would stay night forever." Although Anna's condition was induced by otherworldly manipulations, the exchanges between Anna and Graham also serve nicely as representative of the loveless, alienated couple so prevalent in cinema of the 1960s. As Anna calmly poisons her partner's tea in the kitchen, it seems almost a natural act of a person in despair over a failing relationship, a symbol of the impending death of a failed tryst. Finally, there is Candace Ford (Emma Jones), apparently a wealthy and unattached widow. Although Candace may have suitors, she seems quite dependent on her maid, Donna, the pair comprising yet another serviceable couple in the scenario. Donna is acquiescent, solicitous and subservient, Candace polite but aloof, the pair falling neatly into predictable master-slave behaviors.

The three harpies, with their allusions to the three witches of Shakespeare's Macbeth, create as mentioned one of Body's more abstract characterizations, moving the scenario away from the Gothic horror paradigm in favor of

something fantastic and allegorical. As with Shakespeare's witches, the harpies act in some wise as dispensers of divine law, as agents of nature and messengers of doom. Further, they cannily act as the alter egos or doppelgangers of the three Ford women, and indeed are in pivotal scenes with each, often acting as their agents of destruction. In essence, these gruesome she-things foreshadow the Ford womens' eventual fate-to be deranged, eternal pawns of evil. Milligan's decision to drape his "witches" in bold red, green and blue - the key chromatic trio for film and video production - suggest that the filmmaker was well aware of the possibilities of experimentation in this, his first "big" color production, and took the opportunity to heart, filling Body with many playful exercises in color, the harpies being the most conspicuous.

Milligan's British "find," Berwick Kaler, gets the chance to play the obligatory "sympathetic misfit" character, a rather charming hunchback named Spool. While Kaler is a decent actor, best in Bloodthirsty Butchers, he is no Hal Borske or Jack Spencer, and his Spool is a bit too urbane for the scenario. Still, his reminiscing to Candace towards Body's end, telling his tale of childhood abuse and woe, is so similar to the backstories of Igor in Guru and Ivan in Torture Dungeon, they could in fact be the same character, and, it could be argued, are. The story, certainly, is likely Milligan's own, as seen through the eyes of a tortured, self-pitying child, aghast at his parents' lamentable treatment of him. Like the harpies, Spool is used in Body as comic messenger, revealing essential plot points to the other characters and the audience before meeting his dire, and inevitable fate. Even Spool's fate has import, his "crucifixion" (being nailed to a tree) a symbolic act which not only exercises the filmmaker's obsessive need for depicting sado-masochistic acts, but surely mocks the fabled figure of redemption which "All Souls Church" is purportedly devoted to worshiping. (On the same subject, a good deal of time is wasted on Paul, as he tediously attempts to extract himself from his bondage-by-rope, as Milligan playfully uses a s/m motif as time filler.)

In due course, Susan, Anna and Candace are all summoned to Carfax Abbey, and all meet gruesome ends (or so we think). The finale of Body is the "yearly meeting" of the vampire clan, and is possibly Milligan's greatest set piece. Filmed outside at dusk, using a Vaseline-smeared lens and spooky library music, the scene is eerie and atmospheric and compelling. Of this memorable sequence, Jimmy McDonough noted, "Milligan creates a very eerie and atmospheric bacchanalian feast,'" and Walter Gay believes it to be "one of the

most striking passages Milligan ever filmed."6 Here, Milligan cleverly uses silhouettes, up-angle shots, overlapping music tracks, verite camera-work and characters spotlighted against inky black backgrounds to create a highly disorienting, even abstract scene which at moments, harkens back to early experimental film such as Jack Smith's Normal Love (1963). Distorted, half-seen, grotesque figures grasp at foodstuffs, surrounded by platters of unnamed meals, flickering candles, and omnipresent flowers, portraying a decidedly funereal festival. One of the participants comments, "Delightful meal-what vintage?," and Ford cheekily replies, "Late 20s," a reference which would logically refer to the date of the wine being served, but here refers to the age of the recently slaughtered Ford women, who are serving their masters well as the main course in this gruesome cannibal orgy.

Algernon Ford (Gavin Reed) in full ritual regalia, the failing patriarch preparing ceremony, from The Body Beneath (1970) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

The centerpiece of the scene is a war of wills between the Reverend Ford and the resurrected spirit of Queen Elizabeth I (Judith Heard). The infamous matriarch of Great Britain steadfastly maintains that the Ford clan must remain at Highgate Cemetery, and thus retain England as their home and their heritage. The anachronistic insertion of a vaunted historical figure into Body thrusts the remainder of the film into the realm of diachronic fantasy. Although she is considered the symbol of a "golden age" for the British Empire, Elizabeth was also known to be cautious and conservative (some might even say passive) in affairs of state, personality traits well in keeping with her sentiments as expressed in Body. As well, the presence of Elizabeth I as character is a nod to Milligan's beloved Elizabethan theater, aspects of which appear with regularity during the films of this period.

The upstart Ford counters that with all the mess they have made there recently, it is better to cover their losses and move to a promising new land where laws are lax and land is cheap -America. This is a telling reference of the emigration to America of a mass of native Britons, an exodus begun circa 1609, and lasting well into the 1800s. The settlers of "The New World" desired to make a revisionist interpretation of England, one without religious persecution, an agenda which translates directly to the vampire clan's motives. Furthermore, a large percentage of these emigres called London their home, a fact well in keeping with the Fords' parallel project. Yet true Anglophiles called these explorers traitors, while the adventurers themselves maintained that only exponential growth to other lands would ensure the survival of the great British Empire. Elizabeth, voicing the sentiments of her homeland well, has nothing but disdain for this new land: "What is America? Pimps! Prostitutes! Religious Fanatics! Thrown out of England but a few small centuries ago! They're the scum of the earth!"'

As an ominous bell continues to ring in the background, foretelling doom for one and all, Ford reveals that their final destination in America will be Forest Lawn Cemetery. This legendary burial site, located in Glendale, California, was the brainchild of Dr. Hubert Eaton, considered at its inception a radical experiment in interment facilities, a veritable revolution in fact, designed to be pleasing to the eye as well as a celebration for the living - in

effect, the "New America" of graveyards. Due to its proximity to Hollywood, Forest Lawn quickly became the favored resting place of many in the entertainment industry. The cemetery is also a celebration of the arts, with famous paintings, murals and sculptures adorning the grounds. To many, Forest Lawn seems a modern "burial place of the Gods," and so Algernon's choosing of this notorious locale, with its embedded elitism and occult resonance, makes perfect sense.

After setting poor Spool on fire in a breathtaking night scene, the Ford family prepares to set off on their trek to that most luckless of empires-America. Body ends with an ironic coda that reinforces the ominous import of the finale: Susan wakes up, apparently having cheated death by becoming a vampire herself, and quickly bites Paul, making him hers forever. The two look around their new home, Carfax Abbey, and Susan gushes, "This is all ours!" The "new" Fords, like their emigrated predecessors, are now free to copulate, and breed endless generations of monsters in their inherited suburban home. As in Bloodthirsty Butchers and elsewhere, the horror of heterosexual procreation continues unabated, an infernal machine unchecked by any attempt to still it. At Body's fade-out, and throughout the cast listings, the series of four caws of an unseen crow which started the film repeat in an endless loop, well after the film's fade out. In many cultures, the caw of a crow stands as an ill omen, predicting death and conflict, with multiple crow caws amplifying the probability of destruction - this repetition of an easily recognizable chimera not only alludes to expiry and devastation for all mortals, but echoes the hegemony of patriarchal tyranny and heterosexual demonism, that diabolical cabal which constructs the living hell known as "the world." As well, the seemingly endless looping of the crow caws stands as a sort of ritual invocation, a curious aesthetic trope which suggests that Milligan, as sound editor, may have been playfully trying to summon his own demonic energy in order to curse the film, which by this time had signaled the termination of his ill-fated contract with Cinemedia Films.

One of the most satisfying aspects of Body is that, even though it hews to several main stream film principles and in some ways even follows a relatively traditional horror template, it still reflects Milligan's melodramatic, misanthropic viewpoint, for at the film's end, it becomes clear that the bad guys win. Two out of the three Ford women have been slaughtered, along with their partners, and the remaining female and her mate have become forcibly

associated with the demonic clan. Likewise, the Ford group in main seems to have successfully made the transition from England to America, to begin their assault on that hapless land. As in so many other Milligan films, only the villains prosper, only the heroes are vanquished -Body thus comes across as equal parts serio-comic historical tragedy and sardonic cautionary fable. The gore quotient in Body is minimal, the showcase scene being the gouging out of a maid-servant's eyes with Mrs. Ford's knitting needles. The attacking of eyes, so prevalent in Milligan's films (and elsewhere in the extreme horror genre) has here a self-reflexive quality-the destruction of the protagonist's gaze bears allusion to an attack on the sensibilities of the film viewer, who is (hopefully) traumatized by the graphic depictions of dismemberment and disembowelment so prevalent in the genre. Milligan also peppers Body with some noteworthy political asides, which likely reflect the cultural climate of 1960s England. Two of the most conspicuous are Paul's bitter observation early on, "Sex is one of the only free things left, in England, anyway," which reflects disenchantment with current economic conditions, and the "Reverend" Ford's later admonition, "London is a police state after midnight," a liberal sentiment which may well be a veiled reference to the travails of the homosexual community in puritanical Great Britain. By the time of the filming of Body, certain homosexual activities in England had only been partially decriminalized-many acts, including anonymous encounters in public places (i.e., "cruising," not coincidentally one of Milligan's favorite pastimes) were still illegal and punishable by arrest and imprisonment.

Body would eventually be released with Guru, the Mad Monk as Milligan's only selfdistribution effort. The pair of films comprise a harsh, if reactionary statement on organized religion, and each film's villain is a mocking caricature of errant clergy, but there are significant differences between Father Guru and the Revered Ford. Guru, from all accounts, appears to have entered the clergy full of faith and hope and high intentions of serving his congregation well, and fell only when circumstances caused him to become bitter and cynical, ultimately concerned with his own puny survival. Algernon Ford, however, has never been "a man of God," in fact worshiping the competition, the dark forces of evil. Ford is perhaps the more sinister of the pair, as he callously impersonates a servant of deity to serve his own agenda. Another clue may be seen in the name chosen for each character's enterprise - Ford, whose goal is the eventual conversion of all of humanity into a ghoulish "master race," might

logically (or coyly) call his front-business an "All Souls Church," whereas Guru's temple, which celebrates and exploits the failings of those, himself included, who have lost their spiritual and ethical mooring, is truly a "Lost Souls Church." Finally, though, both Guru and Ford see their own (and their family's) survival as the immutable fact of human existence, and as such become agents of destruction to their communities, and it is perhaps this affinity which aligns them most closely.

It seems evident that with Body, Milligan was trying to create something akin to an art-horror film within the grindhouse horror template. As mentioned, there is a bold, conspicuous use of color, all the more impressive in a film shot in a rush, on location, with 16mm film stock. Body features some fascinating camera movement, composition and angles, and even with its relatively "epic" scope, there is still a sense of immediacy and intimacy which harkens back to Milligan's smaller films- one can hear the camera clacking away in the background in many of the close-ups, a splendid earmark of the unapologetic primitivism which was always one of Milligan's true strengths. As usual boasting an admirable script, Body's dialogue scenes are leisurely paced, a distinct change for Milligan, and in this instance an improvement. Even the title bears clues of Milligan's intent -"The Body Beneath" suggests the mortal, fleshly being, forever estranged from the eternal, ethereal essence of Man which might be termed "The Spirit Above." To Milligan, Heaven is perhaps the spirit, whereas Hell is surely the body, and its endless, insatiable needs. Mortal existence is the lowest level of existence- an edict in all world religions and many major philosophies- and spiritual is the highest. The classic horror monsters- Frankensteins, werewolves, vampires, zombies- all have in common an obsessive, even accursed need to retain their temporal, material existence, to return in some wise to that "sack of flesh and blood," rejecting the assuredly preferable existence of the spirit, eternal and joyous in the void. These sad creatures, figuratively speaking of course, are "demonic" precisely because they have never been willing and/or able to make that vital intellectual jump to accepting the spiritual unknown over the low, but familiar, prison of temporal existence, a prison which, tellingly, always pronounces a sentence of being trapped forever in decaying, deformed, spiritually depleted mortal vessels. These fantasy figures thus represent the human beings' collective fear of death, striving against all good judgment to retain their temporary, everdisintegrating bodies forever. This view seems to align well with Milligan's overall thesisthe

chronic pursuit of lust and greed, which inevitably leads to Herculean suffering and violent death, is intrinsically connected with man's lower self, that of his immediate animal (read: bodily) needs. Even the Ford's chronic vampiric pursuits, seemingly more curse than blessing, are merely another form of both earthly lust and greed, as they must physically target the flesh and blood of young mortals to continue their errant legacy, an act which, as many have observed, is merely metaphoric sex. Further, the Fords, as all vampires, are literally addicted to remaining in their bodies eternally, surely a hell on earth for any sentient being - and as Milligan states again and again, lust and greed are addictions of the most diabolical kind, which unerringly and mercilessly destroy their victims.

Considering how accomplished Body is, how largely successful as a modern Gothic, reaction to it has been somewhat surprising. It appears to have not warranted even the slightest acknowledgment from the mainstream press of the day, and while this is not surprising for a low-budget film marketed ostensibly for the grindhouse ghetto, it is nonetheless disappointing that no adventurous critic stumbled upon Body in its original run, and saw fit to chronicle its many singular charms. Yet even when Milligan became something of a cult icon, film buffs still seemed terribly divided on Body-horror host/cum film reviewer John Stanley inexplicably called the film "beneath contempt"'; Michael Weldon, of Psychotronic fame, bafflingly labeled it "terrible junk."9 Yet others did manage to see Body's worth, and/or Milligan's growth as a filmmaker, such as Walter Gay, whose writings on Milligan called Body "one of his best""; Video Watchdog auteur Tim Lucas saw Body as "one of Milligan's most accomplished efforts""; finally, Milligan biographer Jimmy McDonough calls Body "Milligan's most visually arresting film."" Ironically, perhaps the most glowing review of Body comes from Boxoffice, the industry trade magazine, which seems highly impressed with the film:

> Continuing the vampire legend, "The Body Beneath" is a neat horror picture despite the familiar territory. It's half of a Nova International duo and is far superior to its running mate, "Guru the Mad Monk." Directed, written and photographed in England by Andy Milligan, the film on the surface has little to recommend it: a completely unknown cast and really poor photography (the print has been blown up from 16mm). The cast, however, gets into the spirit of the thing and Milligan's bright dialog shines through. The vampires' convention at the end is stylishly done and Gavin Reed's speech is a gem. A

> twist ending tops the finale of many a low-budget thriller. With Milligan's background in sex pix, it's not surprising that the juvenile leads are introduced via a nude love scene. This can easily be clipped out to keep the rating within reach of the kids. Gore has been played down, with the emphasis on atmosphere. Jackie Scarvellis, also known as a writer, is the heroine and Reed a typical British vampire. Other parts are handled competently, which is a bit unusual under the circumstances. Produced by Cinemedia Films in color, this should go over wherever horror films have an audience.13

This begs the question of what Body's denouncers reacted to. Certainly, Body is a quantum leap from earlier Milligan efforts- it seems the filmmaker was consciously trying to get away from his seedier early sexploitation roots, for better or worse, and become something of a film craftsman. In this he succeeded with Body, but along the way, certain things were admittedly left behind. The raw, gritty verite camerawork of the early films is largely missing (but for the finale), as is most of the lurid sexual content of the early films. Also, although Body is a horror film, there is surprisingly little gore, one of Milligan's overall trademarks, and that which exists is rather sedate. Yet what remains from the past is strong - a tight, highly prosaic screenplay, full of whiny diatribes against the human race, along with bold characterizations of both male and female. To compensate for the lack of sensationalism, Body, replaces it with relatively lush locations, some impressive and complicated camera movement (Bill Landis called the camerawork "fluid and expressionistic") and a general sense of narrative coherence often lacking in earlier Milligan efforts.14

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The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972)

From any traditional entertainment perspective, The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (henceforth referred to as Rats) is a flop. Confusing, lethargic, unengaging, and emotionally distant, Rats is one of Milligan's most "tired" efforts, (purportedly the last production shot in England before his return to the States), and is in many ways a rough sketch of the main elements of the far superior The Body Beneath. However, Rats is also one of Milligan's most structurally complex and philosophically consistent films, and it also stands as a rather magnificent example of a cultural product formed by the almost random combination of disparate elements to create a strange patchwork monstrosity, which stands today as something approaching an avant-garde film hybrid. Further, Rats contains two of the most extraordinary performances, by women, in all of the Milligan oeuvre.

Rats is also a rare chance to see the filmmaker as actor. The only confirmed scene with Andy Milligan occurs at the hour mark, as a female character visits a local gunsmith. Milligan plays the gunsmith as a vaguely comical character, deferential and neurotic. There is much confusion about another role in the film, that of an alcoholic shopkeep named Micawber - many fans, the author included, believed for many years the role to be played by Milligan, as the character, even under heavy make-up, looks so much like the person who subsequently plays the gunsmith. Tim Lucas readily credits Milligan in his article on the film,' as does Bill Landis.' However, Milligan vehemently denied playing Micawber when asked by fans, and Milligan biographer Jimmy McDonough credits one "Eric Concklin" as the actor in the role.' Playwright Robert Patrick has verified that there is an Eric Concklin, who resides in Manhattan and is/was a theater actor and director, and who was likely a compatriot of Milligan during this time period, so it seems likely (although still unverified either way) that

Milligan in fact did not play Micawber, a fact which may disappoint Milligan aficionados.'

Rats started life as a Gothic horror, along the lines of the aforementioned The Body Beneath, under the shooting title Curse of the Full Moon. The title, which alludes to the familial curse of the protagonists, is almost assuredly a tongue-in-cheek reference to gay anal sex, a pastime dear to the filmmaker's heart, so it would appear that scenarist Milligan was having fun with this scatter-shot effort. The turgid screenplay involves the Mooney clan who, as do so many of Milligan's fantastic families, have an age-old curse upon them, which assures eternal suffering, if not outright destruction. The time-honored trope in Gothic fiction of the centuries-old curse which haunts a bloodline is used time and again by Milligan as metaphor for the unchecked (apparently uncheckable) continuance of errant, corrupt bloodlines, through lust-fueled procreation, as runaway genetic experiments which poison mankind unto eternity.

Rats starts off with a (relative) bang - within the lush topiary gardens of the Hempstead Heath Estates (also the filming location for The Body Beneath), two thugs torment an asyet-unnamed misfit, thrashing him with switches before attempting to light him on fire. This scene nicely dovetails the random violence of the current day with the late Victorian era, accenting one of Milligan's motifs about the timeless nature of the violence inherent in Man. The sadistic male-male behavior, with clearly sexual connotations, is gleefully captured by a roaming hand-held camera, which aptly recalls the spirit of earlier Milligan sexploitation product. The ensuing template for Rats follows that of other Milligan excursions, The Body Beneath and Bloodthirsty Butchers foremost among them - a dying, or otherwise threatened patriarchy; an ambiguous woman character who may be mother, sister, or mistress; sisters who are divided and conquered rather than rallied toward solidarity; the deformed, degenerate outsider; young males who are little more than sperm donors; a vapid pregnant couple. As the plot structure is rather straightforward, it may be more useful to give quick sketches of the main characters, an exercise which will reveal some of Milligan's more profound themes and prejudices.

The main character in Rats, and the closest thing to a protagonist the film boasts, is Diana (Jackie Skarvelis). Although she will end up forfeiting her finer qualities by film's end to ultimately perpetuate the Mooney legacy, Diana as pictured in the majority of Rats is a common cultural archetype of the time period: the intelligent, independent female attempting to sever ties with a controlling family. Herein can be witnessed the seeds of the burgeoning feminist revolution, as women were beginning to see the roots of, and forge severance from, the debilitating patriarchal agenda of modern culture. Time and again in Rats, Diana asserts her independence as an adult and a woman, from her tyrannical father foremost, but also from family members and even her husband. Yet ironically, Diana is consistently championed as the one hope of the family - it was she who was sent to an allmale medical school in order to, by her career, save the Mooney bloodline - and she is thus positioned as the designated male of the family-her biological brothers will be seen as sexually and socially impotent. In sum, Diana is a terribly conflicted character, having one foot in patriarchal tradition and the other in gynocentric autonomy. To the Mooneys, Diana has betrayed the family by running off to Scotland, taking the time to get married while attending medical school. Returning to the family fold, Diana expects and receives the worst from her relatives, who by and large hold her in contempt for her apparent betrayal of the threatened family legacy. Papa sent Diana off to university specifically in order to help him with his "experiments" (which can be seen as shorthand for the continuation of the Mooneys) and thus patriarchy, in perpetuity). Further complicating matters is an occurrence which both underscores Diana's betrayal of her father's wishes, but ultimately serves them well - she is pregnant with child, an almost obligatory revelation in a Milligan horror film. Diana insists that she does not share the Mooney curse, as her mother differed from those of her siblings, and that her baby will be healthy, but Papa sadly informs her that of course, it was his evil seed, and not the mother's, that poisoned Diana with the horrible "curse" (i.e.) the dubious "talent" of procreation) which she has inherited. Papa intones menacingly, "You are not an ordinary woman-you are playing with fire!" Unable to con vince Diana to follow the original plan for Mooney omniscience, Papa threatens to cut off Diana's food and shelter, richly underscoring patrist culture's most powerful weapons used against female insurgency - the threat of exile and poverty.

Papa Mooney (Douglas Phair) is a daft, doddering old fool, a cartoon tyrant, a recognizable literary character both fearsome and absurd. He may remind us of any number of compromised patriarchs in the early works of Shakespeare, with his alternately stentorian and foppish manner, his pathetic dependence on family members whom he subsequently tries to control. He certainly exists as an apt emblem of a decaying patrist society, all the moreso as he doesn't even appear to have a first name, giving him an anonymity which underscores his symbolic function. At one point, Mooney declares himself to be 180 years old, further signifying that he represents the patriarchal tradition in toto, as did Algernon Ford in The Body Beneath. And as with Algernon's blood transfusions, Papa needs chemical substances, dutifully provided by family members, to artificially prolong an evil life which "Mother" nature, left to her devices, would have extinguished long ago. Confined to either an easy chair or his sickbed, Papa's frequent attacks, thwarted only by the most stringent efforts of the younger (primarily female) generation further reinforces that he represents an obsolete political system - as one family member observes, "A man's heart isn't meant to last as long as papa's...." The curse of the Mooneys, of which Papa ruminates endlessly, is specifically stated to be carried on through the birth of succeeding generations- an apt metaphor for the horror of continued human procreation, one of Milligan's most identifiable concerns.

Diana's younger sister, Monica (Hope Stansbury) is also a dyed-in-the-wool Milligan archetype - the contentious, potentially violent woman, who also happens to be insane. These are character traits known to the family- "Monica hates everything and everybodyshe's one big hate!"- and to herself as well, as she introduces herself as "The little sister - the bitch!" Smartly essayed by Hope Stansbury, Monica is a fascinating character, a petulant woman-child, quick to tell tall tales and spread lies about her siblings, especially her hated sister, and quite similar to Carol in Seeds of Sin. Diana and Monica share a bitter rivalry which more than once turns into physical confrontation. As so often in a Milligan film, two (or more) sisters battle for a father's "throne." Where there might be female solidarity, there is always instead petty infighting, ensuring that the father figure always holds the upper hand, using the oldest trick in the book: divide and conquer. Monica's mental instability is expressed vividly in a scene where she delivers food to

brother Malcolm, who is chained like an animal in his room, surrounded by free-roaming poultry. Monica taunts the sad sack with the food, burns him with candle wax, and when the poor fool responds aggressively, savagely whips him in an absurd mockery of parental disciplining. One wonders if this scene from domestic hell depicts an extrapolated moment from Milligan's childhood, with his own alcoholic, criminally insane mother.

As mentioned, Malcolm (Berwick Kaler) is a savage man-beast, a disabled and pathetic misfit which expresses succinctly Milligan's feelings about the male offspring of monster families, possibly including himself. Malcolm fills the role often portrayed by the sympathetic hunchback in other Milligan films, a character which is unerringly an object of pity and derision, and the victim of his guardian's cruel sadistic tendencies. Malcolm's room eerily reflects his own dire mental state, while also being expressive of the bestial quality of his treatment by his caretakers- it is a looney-bin of savagery barely contained, including live chickens which dart aimlessly about in the vile hell-space. Poor Malcolm howls at the moon, while Diana says, "he has the instincts of an animal," but it is only too clear that it is the other Mooneys who are behaving like "animals," and must confine the victim of their endemic bestial behavior to an obscure room, far from the light of day. Milligan families always boast one or more such victims, who are rarely if ever allowed social scrutiny, where the crimes of the family might be subject to public judgment.

Phoebe (Joan Ogden) is perhaps the most puzzling character in Rats, echoing similar characters in Torture Dungeon and The Ghastly Ones. Throughout most of Rats it is unclear exactly what Phoebe's position is in the Mooney clan. From her role as Pa's confidant and caretaker, as well as her continual chastising of the Mooney "children," the viewer assumes that she is the family matriarch. Yet Phoebe states at one point, "Ever since Momma died..." which suggests that she is in fact the eldest of the Mooney daughters, a revelation reinforced when she confesses, at film's end, of having had sexual relations with Pa. Rather than clearing up the issue, this declaration makes Phoebe's position in the family even more obscure. She is a Mooney sibling, but she has breached that moral boundary with her incestuous act, and may come across more as a mother or mistress figure to

the others. This ambiguity of clearly-defined familial roles occurs often with one or more female characters in Milligan's films, suggesting reference to similarly fuzzy social/sexual boundaries in his own family.

Diana's husband, Gerald (Ian Innes), is another common Milligan character-the dumb heterosexual male, whose function is essentially that of sperm donor. Their existence in Milligan's scenarios seems to be solely to provide the reason for the portentous plot point of the female protagonist's pregnancy. In Rats, Gerald performs one other function, that of a tangible threat to the Mooney elder's omniscience. Papa feigns an immediate dislike for Gerald, whom he sees as his replacement, an interloper from outside the family bloodline proper, a challenge to patrist hegemony. As do all the main characters in a Milligan opus, Gerald confesses his own sordid family secrets, including that his father was a child rapist. Father was hung for his crimes, and Mother died shortly after, leaving Gerald in the care of a cruel orphanage, where he was ritually bound and beaten, training him in the sadomasochistic ritual, an obligatory education for Milligan's hapless tragedians- everyone in the Milligan universe has been touched by Evil, and has the seed of Evil within them.

Finally, Mortimer (Noel Collins), the only male Mooney child, is a vapid simpleton, a degenerate cipher, almost as psychologically crippled as sad Malcolm, but with his psychosis deeply repressed. As a group, the Mooneys portray a comical caricature of the daft, insular British family of "old money," a throwback to Victorian times in their homage to tradition and obsolete manners. The difference, or eccentricity of the Mooneys is stated loud and clear throughout Rats, and the group seems alternately proud and ashamed of those personality quirks which make them "special." At one point, Pa crows proudly, "We're all impossible - that's part of the Mooney charm!" Later, Pa clarifies, rather darkly, "Society doesn't accept us because of what we are. We are enemies of society, and we must protect ourselves by being self-sufficient." The notion of this family as being "enemies of society" is key to the thesis of Rats which, like many other Milligan films, declares that the insular, self-serving biological family is a blight on society, acting to destroy rather than aid it, deleterious to individuals and society as a whole. The monstrously egocentric Milligan family always works at cross

purposes to the general functioning of the community, as their agenda is pure, naked survival.

As for the future of the Mooneys, Pa believes that all is lost, that future generations of Mooneys will be even more socially maladjusted than the present roster-when Diana declares to Pa that she wants to have children, he moans, "It would be disastrous!" Throughout Rats, Pa Mooney prattles on endlessly about the continuance of the family, and is not above tampering with nature to do so, as witness his obscure "experiments"-but even he has his doubts: "We do not know if we can start a new bloodline...." More than once, Pa insists that Diana must continue his mysterious work - "Without those experiments, the family would become extinct"-here, he refers to a eugenically-geared breeding program to maintain a "pure" Mooney race. All Milligan families seek a racial purity which alludes to the eugenics phenomenon of the early 20th century and, by implication, leads directly to the specter of incest, the only way of insuring that the family bloodline will not be tainted by inferior racial elements from the outside. And of course, the hideous products of incestuous mating only illustrate the disastrous result of this line of thinking taken to its logical conclusion. As with all Milligan families, the insular quality of the Mooneys clearly suggests incest, in Rats primarily alluded to rather than exposed overtly. When brother and sister Diana and Mortimer share a lovely walk in the garden, they hold hands and express intimate sentiments to each other: "Anything to make my favorite sister happy." When Monica taunts poor Malcolm in his barn of squalor, there appears to be a definite sexual component to their subsequent wrestling, a notion enhanced by the awareness that Monica always initiates these confrontations, as they must serve some profound psycho-sexual purpose for her.

Family portrait, Milligan-style. The lycanthropic Mooneys reveal themselves as the monsters they really are in this rare publicity shot from Andy Milligan's astounding The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

The horror elements in Rats are stitched on sloppily and hastily, and comprise the film's most endearing, or disingenuous facet, depending on your point of view. Throughout the film, the all-too-amusingly named "Mooneys" fret endlessly about the coming of the full moon, an obvious clue which all but gives the punchline away, although the family's dark "secret" is not revealed until Rats' catastrophic conclusion. Yet the revelation of lycanthropy mirrors the preeminence of other deep, dark family secrets, both told and unrevealed, horrible truths which, if exposed to the light of day, would render the clan immobile and destroyed. The monstrous secret of the Mooneys largely works as metaphor for their equally diabolical moral transgressions, including incest, torture and probably bestiality, and their eventual transformation into cheap monsters merely illustrates what "cheap monsters" they are in the depths of their black hearts.

The payoff of Rats' taunting title finally arrives, as Papa Mooney suddenly turns into a dime-store werewolf, a laughably bad transformation which comes across as somewhat jolting to the viewer (who may in fact be asleep by now). As Papa Werewolf dies, Phoebe reveals that she was his lover, yet her position in the family is still unclear-was she an incestuous daughter or an obscure mistress? Phoebe then confesses that she is the one who poisoned Diana's mother post-partum and, her crimes now revealed, she too turns into the cartoon beast that she really is. Mortimer, Monica and Malcolm soon follow suit, as the entire family shows their true moral colors. Diana and Gerald conveniently dispatch them all with earlier-procured silver bullets, in a conspicuously hasty tie-up which suggests that Milligan had less than no interest in this aspect of the film, wanting to discharge it as quickly as possible. To Milligan, the only interesting "monsters" are the human ones-supernatural nonsense was clearly not his forte.

The bizarre insertion, at the last minute and seemingly randomly, of a traditional horror trope probably served foremost the cultural purpose of promising the producer a marketable "monster movie," a promise which Rats has heretofore betrayed, yet the absurd bait-and-switch horror finale does end up serving Milligan well, illustrating in strictly comic-book form one of the filmmaker's most prominent themes-that Man is a monster. Man's innermost self, barely held in check by the social contract, is a savage, beastly thing, ready to emerge at any moment to wreak havoc and destroy his enemies. In addition, thanks to the malefic act of procreation, the future itself is monstrous, as it will see the expansion of this monstrous beast which, apparently, cannot be tamed or exterminated. Mankind gets worse, not better, the longer he remains on this mortal coil, and thus, all progress is essentially regression. Further, by insisting that Milligan add some spurious, disengaging rat footage (discussed below), producer Mishkin unwittingly reinforced the basic theme of the film. Especially in urban environments, rats are generally perceived as low vermin who breed recklessly, creating armies of rodent citizens which then attack and despoil the environment - and this is apparently how Milligan saw the human race.

Rats ends with an amusing twist ending, which underscores the inability of Man to escape his past or correct his future. Diana and Gerald seem

poised on the brink of a new life together, with all of their familial woes behind them. They bicker, like any ordinary couple, on where they are to reside. Gerald wants to locate in Scotland, far away from all this unpleasantness, but Diana, still loyal to the Mooney clan, insists they are to remain in the Mooney mansion "for the rest of our lives." To emphasize the point, she miraculously turns into a werewolf and kills her now-obsolete sperm donor, reinforcing her total and utter dedication to the family line, but also revealing herself to be just another human monster, sure to produce more monstrous offspring. This plot point is so similar to that of Bloodthirsty Butchers, The Body Beneath and others, it seems almost destined to become a sacred ritual in Milligan's films to show the dire continuance of vile mankind.

In another marvelous Milligan coda, the now-widowed Diana speaks with a silly neighbor, Mrs. Vishinsky (as in vicious) over her upcoming werewolf baby. Vishinsky crows, "I hope it's a boy!," illustrating how naive women support and celebrate the patriarchal imperative, even as it further marginalizes and oppresses them. The nutty neighbor then ruminates on possible names for the child if it is unfortunate enough to be a female, and insists that it be named after a flower (Iris) Violet, Lily, Rose, Petunia), clearly underscoring the female's only acceptable role in patriarchy - that of receiver and incubator of male seed, i.e., breeder. As the camera pans up to the heavens, the busybody continues, "But you have to be very careful when you Christen a baby, because when they grow up...," leaving the viewer to draw the conclusion that "when they grow up," the child will rebel against the parents who misnamed them, becoming just another embittered enemy of society, and continuing the debacle of civilization unchecked. Although the loss of her family is seen as tragic by the community, Diana has, in fact, achieved exactly what her father wished - to carry on the malefic Mooney seed into eternity, thus illustrating that an evil woman is just as qualified to carry on the patriarchal juggernaut as any dull sperm donor or cruel father-tyrant. Once again, the bad guys win - the bad guys being humanity.

Early in the film, as Diana and Gerald discuss their future, it is revealed that the young man is an aspiring artist, and Diana insists that he continue in his chosen goal, even if it means their financial hardship. This male artist

character turned up, almost verbatim, in The Body Beneath, and surely represents Milligan, the struggling artist who remained true to his muse, even when it meant ridicule, failure, destitution. Rats' original incarnation, Curse of the Full Moon, is one of Milligan's most accomplished and sedate melodramas, a very Elizabethan production, from the archetypal characters to the meandering dialogue to the circuitous family secrets to the avowedly antiquarian setting. The drama is filmed in real drawing rooms and chambers, often in static medium shots, making the production very stagy and theatrical. Due to the extreme use of long shots in cavernous halls, the sound is weak and full of echo, making much of the dialogue ethereal, mysterious, hard to decipher. Several times, the imaginative use of a discreetly-placed fog machine creates a most effective verisimilitude. And there are single moments in the original film which border on the sublime; one such scene, both bizarre and abstract, depicts Monica, Mortimer and Phoebe entering a fog-shrouded room, and wandering about aimlessly, looking for something, completely disoriented. A subsequent confusing close-up suggests that Malcolm has turned into a werewolf, and is devouring one of his pet chickens, but the earlier shot, taken out of context, comes across as wildly existential and extremely "arty." The all-too-familiar music is from Milligan's cherished Major Mood Music record from the Thomas J. Valentino music library; among identifiable cues are Roger Roger's "Dreaming Awake," and "Spell of the Unknown," two of the most widely used cues in the library music canon. The production credits include a record number of seven pseudonyms for Milligan -for sets, lighting, makeup, wardrobe, sound, hairstyles and editor. Adding the screenplay, cinematography and direction, the filmmaker performed a whopping ten chores virtually simultaneously, which may make Rats Milligan's signature piece.

When Milligan dragged the completed Curse of the Full Moon back to the U.S., sponsor Mishkin complained that is was "boring and too short."' Mishkin thus concocted a harebrained scheme which, although it turned the finished film into a confusing, arguably unwatchable mess, created something far more important, to the producer at least and possibly to history as well - a marketable cultural product. Mishkin, for one, well knew the value of creating the mythos of a product first, and worrying about its

contents later -for decades he had taken shopworn exploitation films from the 1930s, and more recent foreign films of marginal entertainment value, and turned them into highly lucrative entities by the clever reworking of various cultural cues in order to create products which, for a brief time at least, seemed all but irresistible to local theater patrons. Like the fabled alchemist of old, by adding a brazen new title, garish and lurid advertising art and copy, and in some cases adding racy scenes of his own creation, Mishkin was able to take a lackluster product and create an entirely new persona, sometimes virtually unrecognizable from its source. This is exactly what Mishkin did with Curse of the Full Moon, and while it may or may not stand as one of Milligan's finest accomplishments, it most assuredly stands as Mishkin's masterpiece of grindhouse marketing savvy, a glorious cultural marker which shines even today as an exemplary model of what a clever business person can do with literally any property, given the nerve and talent to correctly intuit the current desires of its intended audience.

In the drive-in and grindhouse marketplace, two of the most popular horror-themed films of the past year or so had been Willard (1971, d: Daniel Mann) and Ben (1972, d: Phil Karlson), both of which concerned pet rats that kill for their masters. The immense popularity of these films, especially in urban settings, was likely due to taking a familiar cultural icon from the ghetto and turning it into a fantasy-horror character, thus mythologizing and glorifying it, and by extension empowering those audience members intimately familiar with the animal. Having neither the desire nor the resources to mount his own full-length rat-centric adventure, Mishkin instructed Milligan to shoot another reel of film (appx. 10 minutes worth), all of which would center somehow around the furry rodents. Milligan acquiesced, ever the deferential craftsman in such cases, and in so doing came up with some of the most conflictual and baffling footage he ever shot.

A brief overview of these scenes created by Milligan in the U.S. at the request of producer Mishkin will be enlightening, as they resonate oddly against the Curse of the Full Moon segments, alternately accentuating and contrasting it in interesting ways. The first U.S. insert occurs at 37 minutes, and is the most loathsome, inexplicably awful scene in the entire Milligan canon (and arguably, in the entire grindhouse repertoire). In this artless,

heartless scene, Monica tortures a real mouse, trapped on an ugly piece of wood which is splattered with blobs of white paint. First, Monica taunts the creature by burning it with candle wax, apparently her favorite method of teasing those under her power. The deranged child-woman then torments the little beast by jabbing a kitchen knife ever closer to its head, finally chopping off an ear, rendering the poor soul stiff with fear. Finally, Monica prepares to hammer a nail into the luckless mouse's head, to deliver the death blow, an act which the audience mercifully does not see to completion. While this scene, which lasts only 42 seconds but feels much longer, does convey Monica's lunatic cruel streak, it more readily reveals Milligan's sadistic tendencies in their ugliest form. Colleague Hal Borske contended that Milligan filmed these added scenes "under duress," but it is extremely doubtful whether Mishkin ordered the filmmaker to specifically torment and abuse a small animal on screen - more likely, Milligan was angered that Mishkin wanted him to insert random rat-centric scenes into his pleasant if unexceptional Gothic horror tale, and took this negative energy to create a scene which vented his distaste for the project (and which he may have thought Mishkin would veto upon screening).' Also, it is on record that actress Hope Stansbury refused to do this scene, a fact which applauds her character, so Milligan found a teenage boy to impersonate Monica's hands in this pitiful, baneful shot.' The scene is generally agreed to be the nadir of Milligan's career, yet the power of the scene remains with the viewer, suggesting that perhaps the filmmaker knew all too well what he was doing. In its most basic form, the brutal scene does act as metaphor for Milligan's view of humanity, the small mouse representing humankind, the horrible disembodied hands the cruel limbs of god, nature, fate, whatever one chooses to call the engines of temporal phenomena. We, the mouse, can do nothing but sit paralyzed, as forces far larger and greater taunt, torture and finally terminate us, playing with our pathetic lives as if they were of no import. This certainly is one of Milligan's most prevalent themes-the impotence of dumb man against cruel fate - and portrayed here more succinctly, if brutally, than anywhere else. Ironically, this horrid scene, Milligan's worst and most shameful, may yet be his most powerful and ultimately significant.

The second U.S. insert occurs at 40 minutes into the film, and features Monica, wearing a most masculine hat, entering a dimly-lit space and seeking a Micawber, apparently the shopkeep of the grimy little hovel. Micawber is a character straight out of Dickens, a cartoon Victorian grotesque, like a similarly-named banker in David Copperfield, or Quilp from The Old Curiosity Shop. Hunched over, draped in dark shawls, face covered in repulsive sores, he is a bonafide creature of the night, who professes he hates the daytime: "Beastly stuff, sunlight." Micawber even acknowledges his literary inspiration: "Dickens is a great writer, don't you agree?" Monica has come to purchase some pet rats, but the lonely Micawber tries to convince her to stay and chat, offering her his ever-present bottle of booze: "It's mother's milk, you know." Monica responds, "We the Mooneys don't drink ... alcohol," a line remarkably similar to one in The Body Beneath. In the suffocating space, Micawber tells of his misadventures with the rodents, how he raised them on the flesh of stray dogs, cats, and even a homeless woman, and how one night they escaped and ate off his arm.

The astounding Hope Stansbury convincingly emotes to a rubber dime-store rat, in one of several added U.S. inserts to Andy Milligan's baffling The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

In the third U.S. insert scene, Monica is back at home, talking happily with her new pets. She names the white mice Phoebe, Willard, Ben and Sally. To one she queries, "You are a girl, aren't you? It's very hard to tell nowadays," a nod to the gender-bending, androgynous tendencies of the ongoing Sexual Revolution. The scene ends as Monica talks to an obviously inanimate black toy rat, wildly different from the white mice seen in the previous shots. She talks to the rat, whom she has aptly named Ben, after his cinematic inspiration. "Ben" bites Monica, which causes the disturbed girl to mercilessly hack the hapless rodent to death - and one can be glad that in this instance, the violence is suffered only by a rubber plaything.

The fourth U.S. insert is perhaps the most bizarre and effective. Monica decides to return the rats to Micawber, as they have proven untrustworthy (or more likely, the spoiled woman merely grew tired of them). Micawber is sleeping off a drunk, and refuses to refund her money, becoming very hostile, and even violent, in the process. Monica finally unleashes the rats on Micawber, who simultaneously burns to death due to a dropped oil lamp. The finale of this scene is Milligan at his most abstract, with a madly swirling camera capturing a truly Boschian landscape of flesh being eaten and burnt, the acts suggested more than chronicled literally, with Micawber's screams and the shriek of a library music string section accenting the holocaust in a crescendo of annihilation which one might even claim, tonguein-cheek, illustrated the just fate of venal capitalism, reduced at its most base to mere peddling of flesh for profit.

The fifth and final U.S. insert scene occurs at well over the hour mark, lasting almost a full reel and adding significantly to the finished film's running time. It also happens to be the heart of Rats, a remarkable scene occurring between between Monica and her friend, another rather deranged creature named Rebekah, a local peasant girl. Rebekah is mentally disabled, if not outright insane, but via an uncanny performance by Lillian Frit (aka Lillian Frith), she becomes one of Milligan's most memorable female characters, eccentric almost to the point of abstraction, in a league with others in the Milligan filmography such as Magda in Torture Dungeon, Corky in Bloodthirsty Butchers and the 3 Harpies in The Body Beneath. The scene takes place largely set against the immense stone retaining wall in front of Milligan's current Staten Island residence (a natural setting also used in Fleshpot on 42nd Street and Blood). Monica and Rebekah are friends- as well as kindred spirits in terms of mental instability. The scene starts as Monica places a bug in Rebekah's mouth, which angers Rebekah no end. Monica, however, insists that she was "only playing." The incident illuminates that the women are acting as if they were children - indeed, very small children - thus suggesting the mental feebleness of each, and giving the pair a certain solidarity which may prove important subsequently. Rebekah has brought a present for Monica, but hesitates presenting it, as she does not believe that Monica really loves her. Monica feigns anger at this insult, which upsets Rebekah even further. This patronizing behavior, this

woefully insecure longing for reassurance of one's devotion to the other, underscores the infantile behavior of the pair, and surely suggests madness as well. Rebekah finally gives up the gift -a jar in which resides a small garter snake. Monica asks the snake's name, but Rebekah confesses that it doesn't have one. Monica haughtily retorts-"Oh, everything has a name - even you have a name!" - a veiled insult which implies Monica's complete loathing of this dumb country girl, to her the lowest thing on the evolutionary ladder.

Monica then tells Rebekah the sad story of "George," the pet frog which Rebekah brought her last week. Apparently, George fell afoul of the Mooneys, and is now numbered among the frogs of eternity. As seen elsewhere with the rats, the very ill Monica obviously likes to draw innocents (animals and people) to her for the sole purpose of torturing and killing them. Rebekah is angered that her good friend didn't invite her to George's funeral - after all, he was called "George the First" (as in George I) who ruled Great Britain and Ireland from 1714 to 1727). Monica's ghastly solution is to dig up King George and "bury him all over again," a notion which Rebekah finds delightful. Monica asks Rebekah if they should name the new snake George, but Rebekah declares, "There are too many Georges already!," another amusing reference to British history, for at least seven King Georges enlightened England's glorious past. Monica decides to call the snake Diana, after her sister, whom she professes to hate. Rebekah counters: "Oh, you shouldn't hate your sister, Monica, its not very nice," clearly referencing herself as Monica's "sister" in female solidarity. The hopelessly insecure Rebekah then timidly asks Monica if she hates her, and the manipulative Monica coyly replies, "Sometimes," which disturbs Rebekah no end, as she hugs and clings to Monica in a most pathetic way. Monica tells Rebekah to "tippy-toe" to the nearby gazebo, where no one can hear them talking. Rebekah obeys, as Monica leans against the stone wall, singing a nursery rhyme, clearly in the throes of accruing dementia. At the gazebo, Rebekah gleefully waits for "her only friend," singing the same nursery rhyme, connecting the two as sisters-in-arrested development. (Recall Carol's similar recitation of nursery rhymes before she devolves completely into psychosis and kills her mother in Seeds of Sin.)

Once Monica arrives at the gazebo, Rebekah attempts to use her coarse feminine wiles to blackmail Monica into eternal loyalty. Rebekah carefully states, "I see lots of thing other people don't see," which apparently includes Malcolm devouring live chickens, and Papa getting his nightly injections. Seeing that Monica is visibly disturbed by these revelations, which leave the Mooneys vulnerable to potential exposure, Rebekah demands that Monica declare herself a "friend forever," and the trapped Mooney woman agrees. Now satisfied with her power over her friend, Rebekah callously asks for "a good meal," and some of the family silverware to seal the deal. Monica acquiesces, and gives her "forever friend" a portentous goodbye kiss as she leaves to fetch the requested booty. When Monica returns, however, it is to hack off Rebekah's hands and chop off her head, depicted via a series of choppy quick cuts which limit the gore to one or two very brief glimpses, but conveys the brute violence of the scene effectively via judicious cutting and the odd angling of shots. (Granted, this observation is based on a rare extant print, which may or may not have been censored from Milligan's original cut.)

This showcase scene illustrates several key themes of the Milligan canon. The women's fascination with snakes and bugs and other small animals reinforces their emotional regression, a common trope for Milligan, especially (but not exclusively) his female characters. This reversion to infantilism, one of Milligan's most frequent markers for insanity, almost invariably reverts to barbarism, explaining much if not all of the violence meted out to various unfortunates in the Milligan canon. Also, two or more women of about the same age are often introduced as possible allies, suggesting the possibility of women's emancipation from patriarchal strictures, but always the naive promise of female solidarity is sabotaged by the individual ego and its self-serving agenda, a process of dissolution aptly enabled by the characters' ever-present insanity. Further, whenever two females have more than a passing acquaintance in a Milligan film, there is invariably a palpable sexual tension implying repressed homosexual longing; here, the clearly adolescent behavior of Rebekah and Monica suggests that their queer play ritual may include fondling, groping, or stroking of the other in a purely childish mockery of sexual sport. Finally, any human exchange in a Milligan film will always expose an ever-fluctuating power play between

two or more calculating individuals, the more ruthless of which will unflaggingly gain the upper hand, and so remarkable scenes such as that between Rebekah and Monica almost supernaturally capture the entire Milligan mythos in a tidy, self-contained nutshell.

Milligan spliced his peculiar new footage somewhat randomly into the existing scenario, and Mishkin released the film under an extraordinary new title: The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! The audacious nature of the title, which promises so much more than any film (and certainly this film) could ever give, and boasting even more marketing power by the brilliant use of exclamatory marks, stands as one of the great concept pieces of the entire grindhouse era, an example of a canny producer pulling out all the stops to make the absolute most of a threadbare marginal product by giving it a ballyhoo far beyond its capacity to deliver. This in short, is the exploitation mythos- not only to exploit topics which mainstream film will not touch, but almost as important, exploit the trust and sensibilities of the intended audience, promising them the moon and giving them (in this case, somewhat ironically) "the moon." Of course, the finished film failed to deliver on its title's delirious promises- the rats are safely in cages, immobile rubber toys, or scared, squeaking mice trying to escape the cruel blade of a knife. They do not feature whatsoever in the plot of the film, and they convey no suspense or terror. Likewise, the werewolves, a laughable bunch at best, appear only briefly at the film's end, in dark, confusing shots which must have almost disintegrated on the giant screen, and they too, carry no dramatic weight. To the grindhouse audience, the werewolf finale must have come across as a bad joke, a ridiculous finale to a tedious, antiquated melodrama. Due to these reasons, plus the fact that by this time, far more accomplished big-budget horror films (think The Exorcist) were flooding the marketplace, and that the market for no-budget "extreme horror" films was quickly drying up, Rats did poorly at the box office, barely breaking even due to Mishkin's extensive advertising campaign.' Also, Mishkin may have sabotaged the film by saddling it, along with its co-feature, Milligan's The Man with Two Heads, with the dreaded GP rating, which ensured that the films would contain little of Milligan's (or extreme grindhouse horror's) trademark gore scenes.' Yet it is exactly these brazen failings as a horror film which make Rats such a fascinating odd duck

in the Milligan canon, a true celebration of the filmmaker's resourcefulness in a treacherous, mercurial marketplace which was only to happy to take an artist's work and hack it to bits in order to glean some quick cash in the equally indifferent grindhouse ghetto.

Jackie Skarvelis and Ian Innes search for family secrets in Andy Milligan's The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

In 1982, the Midnight Video label released Rats, along with Bloodthirsty Butchers, Torture Dungeon and The Man with Two Heads, on VHS video cassette, making them some of the earliest horror releases on that groundbreaking media format. Like its original grindhouse "victims," Rats probably lured many with its provocative title, and proceeded to either alienate or ingratiate its viewers as the monstrously fallacious film unfolded. Yet the amazing Rats boasts one final irony -it is the only Milligan film known to have received television distribution. Shorn the one scene where the poor white mouse is tormented, Rats was released otherwise intact

(including the dismemberment of Rebekah) in an obscure syndication package (possibly licensed by Gold Key Entertainment, but unverified) in the mid-1980s, before fading once again into obscurity.

15

The Man with Two Heads (1972)

Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde turned out to be the perfect vehicle for Andy Milligan, for with it he created what may stand as his magnum opus. All of the ingredients which Milligan had been wrestling with for so long finally came together in a breathtaking excursion into the dark heart of man and, thanks to the strength of the source material, Milligan managed to avoid self-sabotaging tendencies (such as long, pointless soliloquies), which marred the otherwise promising The Body Beneath, in order to fashion a micro-budget melodrama which actually succeeds in holding an audience for its full term. Credit for a good portion of the film's success must be given to two actors who turn in amazing performances: Dennis DeMarne as the "two-headed" doctor, and Julia Stratton as a tragically masochistic dance-hall prostitute. The palpable sexual chemistry between these two illustrate, in striking bas relief, many of Milligan's main thematic concerns: the violent, bestial nature of the male; the mercenary, opportunistic nature of the female; the inherent cruelty residing beneath all sexual activity; the fatal attraction between sadistic and masochistic personalities, a tragic happenstance which seems almost predetermined by certain cultural markers; the heterosexual couple's essentially destructive energy, which annihilates its members whilst simultaneously contaminating the surrounding community.

Alas, producer William Mishkin may have erred when he rejected the film's working title, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Blood, opting instead for The Man with Two Heads, a vapid, generic label which virtually assured that the film would languish unnoticed in the grindhouse/ drive-in marketplace. For reasons unknown, Mishkin wanted to hide the film's literary origins, a move which may have sabotaged the film's chances for finding its true audience.' Were Mishkin to have retained the original title, or perhaps even "gone big" by calling the film Andy Milligan's Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde, the film might

have been able to perform the difficult feat of leaping from the cinema ghetto to coveted art house and mainstream venues, assuredly gaining more critical and popular recognition along the way. Certainly, other minds were noting the striking possibilities of mounting a modern, counterculture retelling of classic horror literature, as less than a year after Milligan's "Jekyll & Hyde" fable came and went without fanfare, the cinema world was taken by storm by a suspiciously similar release: Andy Warhol's Frankenstein (1974, d: Paul Morrissey). As with the Milligan sexploitation films, which almost certainly influenced their own lauded "Flesh trilogy," Warhol, Morrissey and company were likely aware of the fascinating experiments Milligan was conducting, unseen and unappreciated, in the low-budget "art horror" field, and knew exactly how to parlay the basic concepts of these daring cinematic experiments into viable cultural products which had immense box office appeal.

The essential theme of Stevenson's story, and subsequently Milligan's film (henceforth referred to as Two Heads), is that good and evil reside within each and every individual. Even more notable is the fact that both story and film draw the same conclusion: when nurtured or courted, rather than constantly and aggressively marginalized, the evil impulse in Man will eventually reign, taking over the individual, with the only subsequent recourse being to extinguish the vessel which carries it - that is, to destroy the individual. Although certain liberties will be taken with specific plot points within the Stevenson story, Milligan remained admirably faithful to the general structure, and most importantly the thematic thrust, of the source novella, and it is to the filmmaker's credit that in this instance, he knew when to leave well enough alone.

As noted, the Robert Louis Stevenson story carries a very specific, and problematic thesis: within one (and presumably every) individual there exists at least two distinct personalities, one social and one self-centered, one constructive and one destructive, one ethical and one unethical. These dialectally (and morally) opposed forces-the just and unjust, the kind and cruel selves- are inextricably bound together in the human psyche, in essence a sado-masochistic prison for the soul, a dire bondage which pronounces the bleak sentence of existence. Stevenson, among a legion of other artists,

authors and thinkers, was fascinated with the apparent conundrum of the "the thorough and primitive duality of man."2 The isolation, separation and containment of the "good" and "bad" (moral/amoral) elements in individuals, and by extension society, has long been a puzzle attempting solution by its owners, and is the basis of most world religions and political systems. Thus far, man's best efforts to harness these miraculous, ethereal forces have failed. In Stevenson's story, Dr. Jekyll, a man of science, tackles the challenge head-on: "If each (element) could be but housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable."3 A main theme in the subsequent tale is the notion of Science tampering with the natural order of Nature, with its obvious challenge to the religion of the day, a direct assault on "god's law." (Milligan will take this concept and underscore it strikingly, as we shall see.) Also inherent in the war between man's ever-conflicted "double being" is the constant struggle between the material self, with its insatiable, base appetites, and the intangible higher self, that thing called "soul," which aspires to high things- or as Stevenson himself notes, "the perpetual conflict between the desires of the flesh and those of the spirit."4

Dr. Jekyll manages (more by accident than design), to create an alter ego, incarnated at will, which indulges Jekyll's presumably immoral tendencies, his anti-social self manifested as a living thing. The deformed, debased "Mr. Hyde" causes no end of mischief in Stevenson's tale, although curiously (some observers say conspicuously) there is precious little detail as to the monster's actual misdeeds. Most of Hyde's rampage is sketched in highly abbreviated terms: "Tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent, of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career.'" The only acts described with any clarity are Hyde's peculiar assault on "a girl of maybe eight or ten," and the beating to death of an older man.' Hyde's "an act of cruelty to a child...," the only specific reference to possible sexual debauchery in the entire tale, along with the mysterious paying off of the child's family, has been seen by some observers as an allusion to child prostitution, a well-documented underground activity of the late Victorian era. What is clear by inference, however, is that Hyde's nightly excursions consist primarily of sexual deviancy and criminal violence.

Moreover, Hyde's compulsive pursuit of "undignified" pleasures soon "turn towards the monstrous," implying that both the frequency and the nature of said acts increased demonstrably.' Herein lies the germ of the tale. The unchecked indulgence of basely material pursuits leads to both a tolerance of, and addiction towards such activities, appetites which can never be truly sated, and should perhaps be best left alone. In Victorian society, this "leaving alone" largely took the form of the severe repression of these "undignified" appetites, again primarily of a sexual or criminal nature, but including such relatively harmless pastimes as drinking and gambling. And so Stevenson's tale is often seen as a harsh review of that era, whose rigid social structure more often than not merely functioned as clever facade for the community's well-chronicled "undignified" pleasures. It most certainly also reflects the inner spiritual conflict of both Stevenson and the community, with the repressive effects of religious doctrine mingling uneasily with more prurient and impulsive desires, desires thought at that time to be largely a function of demonic supernatural forces on man's soul. This would be particularly so for the Scottish Stevenson, brought up on the stern teachings of the Calvinist church for, as Jenni Calder states, "It is the Calvinist view that man must maintain a constant struggle with evil, that the slightest lapse in vigilance will allow the Devil to triumph.'" While Jekyll's reckless tampering with natural (and one might daresay supernatural) forces amounts to far more than "the slightest lapse in vigilance," the result is the same as, just as in portentous biblical prophecy, once Jekyll-as-Hyde lets his darker impulses take charge, they are at once on a slippery slope towards sure destruction. As Jekyll himself notes, "The doom and burthen of our life is bound forever on man's shoulders, and when the attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure."9

Jekyll naively feels that, as a modern scientist, he can locate the evil side of man, and so isolate and imprison it. Yet instead, he falls in love with it, becoming its slave, not its master. The indulgence of evil, as Jekyll fatally discovers, is a highly addictive pastime, especially in a repressed culture or individual. Also discovered too late is the curious fact that acts of immorality, such as sexual license and substance abuse, are in themselves addictive, two other subtextual themes in the Stevenson story. Finally, Jekyll's failure to accept the evil within himself, attempting to project it

outward as an objective "other," assures its omniscience, and also its emergence, in perverted form, from the fleshly vessel within which it is suppressed.

Jekyll's mysterious "formula" appears to serve a primarily allegorical purpose in the story, as it is but briefly touched upon, and only then as vague reference to various unnamed "powders." Yet one can see the influence of the alchemical tradition of old, wherein magi were purportedly able to manifest exotic potions which could, among other things, turn lead into gold, cause animals to become fatally attracted to one another, protect a kingdom from ruin, or prolong mammalian life indefinitely. As Stevenson's "weird tale" came on the cusp of the Gothic fiction craze of the 1800s, it logically borrowed from that canon's fixation upon magic potions and scientific formulas designed to aid or cheat death for protagonist or villain - one such Gothic blockbuster was William Godwin's St. Leon (1799), wherein the Rosicrucians (a secret Christian sect of white magi) concocted, from the blood of their mentor, an "elixir of life" which promised to sustain existence indefinitely. As well, popular culture was still in thrall at the audacious antics of Joe Balsamo (1743 -1795), who swindled both peasant and king with phony "immortality elixirs" under the guise of the notorious occult charlatan, Cagliostro.

Yet Jekyll's lesson is harsh, all but irreconcilable with previous fables about successful magic formulas. Jekyll stumbles upon his formula by accident, and although his transformation into Hyde becomes a life-altering addiction, he simultaneously notes the traumatic aspects of giving up one's "soul" to forces greater than one's self: "The most racking pains succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death."" In short, Jekyll knows that he has tampered unwisely with nature - and has by no means come closer to solving the riddle of the philosopher's stone - since his inability to recreate his earlier success is due to the fact that the efficacy of the original formula was due to an "impurity," meaning that Jekyll's so-called achievement was a mistake, an anomaly, and can in no way credited to its human manufacturer. Thus, man is humbled yet again as he tries to crack the code of the universe, which will

remain ever closed to his puny, greedy mind; what can be assured by such acts of folly is the tinkerer's destruction.

In any case, Jekyll's "undignified" side, Hyde, is a most interesting creature, as he represents much more than the average Gothic bogey man. He is certainly meant as a caricature of evil, or as the author himself calls it, "the lethal side of man."" Further, Hyde may represent primitive, antediluvian man, the prehistoric brute who remains yet to be "civilized." Yet the reader knows in his heart that Hyde also reflects something far more current and familiar -the savage aspect still haunting modern man, the bad behavior of the guy next door, and perhaps even the worst possible actions of the reader himself-the beast within us all. Many, however, have noted that as "lethal" as Hyde is, Jekyll is the real monster of the piece, the truly evil one, because it is he and he alone who not only births the monster, but lets it exist, even when he knows better. Thus, Jekyll is morally dishonest, for he realizes that once he has unleashed Hyde, his alter ego will eventually overpower the better part of his personality. When Jekyll claims, "The moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde," he both admits culpability and confesses a tragically naive denial of the power of evil over man's psyche.' One could also make the case that although Hyde is "pure evil," Jekyll is at least one-half evil in his hypocrisy and moral recklessness, therefore suggesting that man in sum, composited of equal parts Jekyll and Hyde, is mostly evil. As Jekyll himself calculates, "All human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil."" Via his own destruction, Jekyll-asHyde proves once again that in any battle within man, evil wins.

Although the original story curiously short-sells this aspect, the popular perception of Hyde's midnight travels (and the emphasis of virtually all stage and screen adaptations), is that they primarily concern sexual debauchery. Hyde's acts, alluded to in the story and brought to (sometimes vivid) life in stage and screen productions, has all the earmarks of the sexual compulsive, the addictive personality who uses anonymous sexual trysts as a method of working out various control issues within the unbalanced and lonesome personality. Yet sex, in and of itself, is a force neither for good nor ill. Sex can either bring body and soul together, as in a loving relationship, or rent

them asunder, as in most casual encounters. Compulsive sexual activity is thus more attuned to the casual, anonymous encounter, with its vacuity of moral lesson and tendency towards self-loathing, and far less open to the possibility of sex as a gateway to love, with that trophy's capacity for psychic revelation and moral epiphany. Love expressed sexually has the potential for spiritual unity and moral clarity, whereas the exercising of mere lust advances spiritual alienation, mental confusion and moral ambiguity. For Stevenson, religion and marriage are desired moral pillars of a well-balanced citizenry. To Milligan, as we will see, they are the exact oppo site - and in this way Milligan may have more in common than Stevenson with the Victorian-era prejudice which considers sexual craving a low moral preference, synonymous with evil. Yet to Milligan, both for its capacity to bring out the worst in human behavior as well as its inevitable goal of producing more sinning humans, sexuality is indeed an evil thing, and Mr. Hyde well illustrates the filmmaker's opinion of the heterosexual male.

Even more curious to some observers is the complete absence of any significant female characters in Stevenson's story. Indeed, the only female seen in the entire tale is the brief specter of the girl of "eight or ten" whom Hyde brutally tramples. In addition, the conspicuous silence as to the details of Hyde's nightly escapades in debauchery have led some to see the tale as depicting secret homosexual adventures in deeply repressed Victorian society. Milligan may have been attracted to this aspect of the tale as a veiled fable of closeted and emerging homosexual desire in late Victorian culture. Indeed, the tale as written might have made an interesting all-male scenario under Milligan's hand, although he surely knew that chances for distribution of a gay "Jekyll & Hyde" version would be exceedingly slim. As it stands, Hyde's vicious attacks on women in Milligan's Two Heads begs the question of what exactly is he trying to destroy, which may be the female which stands in his way of male-male happiness.

One of the most radical aspects of Stevenson's story is the alarming revelation that Jekyll knows the only way to destroy Hyde is to kill himself, an awesome moral leap which must have shocked contemporary readers. In the usual Gothic fiction scenario, the bogey man is felled by righteous warriors, leaving the community relatively intact. Not so in Stevenson's tale,

wherein the entire community, symbolized in microcosm via Jekyll & Hyde, is destroyed to rid the world of an unstoppable evil. Although Milligan, for his own reasons, decided that his villain must be destroyed by outside forces, we shall see that this notion of comprehensive destruction fits in well with Milligan's worldview, which states that in order to rid the world of evil, one must rid the world of Man. The malevolent side of man knows this, of course, and will do everything in his power to confuse the issue, as Stevenson's Jekyll well knows: "I know he hears my power to cut him off by suicide." Jekyll also articulates the core of Hyde's fear of his alter ego's power over him: "Had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin."" As only evil knows, as soon as the body dies, all chance for devilry dies with it, reinforcing Stevenson's (and Milligan's) conclusion that it is only man in his material state who may perform gratuitous acts of immorality and violence against others-indeed, he is the only engine in the known universe capable of such malignity.

As for the many stage and screen adaptations of Stevenson's highly resonant tale, most of the major ones eschew the story's framing device, and the characters of Dr. Lanyon and Utterson, presenting the scenario as a straightforward narrative. The first serious stage adaptation opened in 1887 in Boston, under the title Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, written by T.R. Sullivan and starring Richard Mansfield." The most successful silent film version was a 1920 production starring John Barrymore. The first major sound film version was the 1931 production, directed by Rouben Mamoulian and starring Fredric March. All of these, and subsequent versions, took several liberties with Stevenson's story: foremost is the remaking of Dr. Jekyll as a young, relatively handsome man, whereas in the novel he is a homely fiftyyear-old; as well, in many cases, Jekyll is given a love interest, completely (and as mentioned, conspicuously) absent from the source novella; the focus on the original story is on Jekyll, and his fierce moral battle, whereas the stage and screen adaptations almost invariably focus on Hyde, the charismatically repulsive monster; Hyde's "undignified pleasures," only vaguely hinted at in the story, are brought to vivid life in stage and screen versions, almost always focusing on the sadistic sexual abuse of women. Interestingly, several film versions, including Milligan's, add a most

purposeful subplot, depicting Hyde as a sadistic sexual libertine who seeks out and forges an ongoing relationship with a dance-hall prostitute, whom he cruelly terrorizes and abuses in a mockery of the accepted Victorian-era social contract between a customer and his paid servant. Milligan's Jekyll, for one, will explore this dark sadomasochistic tryst in most enlightening ways. This addition of the dance-hall girl character in many adaptations of Stevenson's tale is generally attributed to a similar character in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), a cautionary moral fable which boasts other similarities to the story in question, most prominently a harsh critique of the hypocrisy inherent within the private and public sectors of Victorian society.

As for the film versions of Stevenson's story (and applying to much of the classic horror film canon in general), the focus on the libidinous "monster" Hyde over the conflicted "hero" Jekyll makes sense, as the former's aggressive anti-social antics are more visual, visceral and "sexy" than the mundane cerebral fretting of Jekyll. Moreover, the introduction of one or more females for Hyde to molest creates an almost obligatory dialectical tension, igniting the sexual chemistry between criminal predator and innocent victim, the fragile beauty of the trespassed soul contrasting sharply with the repulsiveness of the offensive brute, who might have otherwise disappointed the audience in his tangible, exposed state. Further, in several film versions including Milligan's, the addition of a love interest in the form of a wife or lover or fiancee balances the moral trespass of the whore - seen as in some ways complicit in Hyde's devious projects-with the child-like purity of a "good woman," and in this way the two females echo the ongoing battle between flesh and spirit which rages between the good doctor and his monstrous "double."

As have several other stage and screen productions of the story (the 1941 film version with Spencer Tracy for instance), Milligan's Jekyll borrows extensively from the 1931 film version directed by Rouben Mamoulian, and starring Fredric March. Some key thematic and expositional points which are clearly borrowed from the earlier film are: Jekyll is a renowned medical professor, and is first seen expounding upon his theory of man's "good & evil sides" during a peer lecture; Jekyll has a fiancee; Jekyll meets a "low-

class" dancehall girl, Ivy, who will figure prominently in his nocturnal escapades as Hyde; Hyde brutally dismisses Ivy's other would-be suitors; Hyde sadistically abuses Ivy, with allusions to rape and sado-masochistic torture; a desperate Ivy unknowingly consults Dr. Jekyll, and bares her whip-lashed body to him; Hyde's increasing savagery eventually results in the brutal murder of Ivy; Hyde is finally killed by a bullet, and is mourned by his servant.

As none of the above exposition appears in the Stevenson text, due credit must be given the 1931 film for suggesting these key plot points for Milligan's Jekyll (although that film itself may have borrowed from earlier stage productions of the tale). However, Milligan ran with these concepts and, in fair comparison, improved on several of them. Surely, an early 1970s grindhouse production of the tale needed a more vivid and intense scenario, and Two Heads complies admirably, showing the sexual torture of the poor wench April in graphic detail, and often with alarming candor. As well, the romantic subplot between Jekyll and his fiancee, a Hollywood conceit which all but ruins both the 1931 and 1941 versions, was wisely reduced in Two Heads to a mere footnote, as it does nothing to further the plot other than to contrast the "good" woman against the "bad"-an obvious point which can be quickly made and forgotten. Most significantly, Milligan made his "Hyde," although never named as such, perhaps the first truly effective and menacing one in screen history. Dennis DeMarne's portrayal, while borrowing somewhat from the Fredric March facial make-up, thankfully borrows nothing else from the portrayal, as March's Hyde is so broadly drawn, so theatrical, it comes across as largely farcical.

Predator and prey: This production still from The Man with Two Heads (1972) depicts Dr. Jekyll (Dennis Demarne) menacingly approaching a brazen tart, underscoring one of the film's main themes: all men are sexual predators, all women are complicit prey.

Andy Milligan's singular take on Jekyll & Hyde opens with a seemingly superfluous prologue, in which a woman solicits a man, presumably for sexual favors, and is punished for her audacious advances. The scene takes place during broad daylight on a city street, suggesting that what transpires is common and accepted social activity, not secretive, suppressed behavior which might occur only under cloak of night. The woman, who is quite homely, looks a great deal like a man in drag, an eventuality which would add a significant gender-centric confusion to the exchange, and would be right in keeping with Milligan's playful tendencies towards gender subversion. Regardless of the player's gender, the conspicuously ambiguous "woman" approaches a well-heeled male, who is first seen leaning against a brick wall for balance, perhaps in the throes of drug-induced ecstasy or

alcoholic stupor. The man accepts the woman's brazen overture, lures her to a secluded spot in a nearby park, and proceeds to molest her furiously, even ripping off part of "her" breast. Finally, the man is seen preparing to beat the woman to death with his raised cane, as the scene cuts.

This scene serves a key purpose for the subsequent film. The audience may assume that the attack was by Dr. Jekyll "as" Mr. Hyde, since that is the tale promised, and the kindly doctor and his alternate have yet to make an appearance. However, when Jekyll makes his entrance in the next scene, it can be seen that he is not the man who assaulted the woman previously- nor will he turn out to be Jekyll's darker half. No, the ferocious male in the prologue is someone else. In his review of the film, Tim Lucas surmised that the man in the prologue was Jack the Ripper, notorious killer of prostitutes in London circa 1888, but there is no evidence to support this claim." In fact, the killer is anonymous, even notably anonymous-he thus functions as symbol, underscoring an important theme of Two Heads specifically, and Milligan's films generally: all heterosexual men are violent predators. The killer could be, and in fact is, literally anyone. The other side of this dark coin is the inescapable inference that the woman, via her brassy solicitations, invited her own destruction, virtually "asking for it." To Milligan, the heterosexual male is a savage, lusting marauder, and the heterosexual female is a dumb, horny slut who deserves everything she gets. This philosophy, expressed so often in Milligan's films, is perhaps never more purely or succinctly expressed as in this indelible scene, which will resonate well with Jekyll's own tragic demise - even the woman's pleas against her attacker, that she doesn't "go in for this rough stuff!," rings hollow as she had recklessly solicited dangerous public sex with a complete stranger.

Some days later at the police station, Dr. William Jekyll (Dennis DeMarne) and his assistant Smithers (Berwick Kaler) visit police inspector Cross (Raymond Cross). Upon meeting the esteemed doctor, Cross gushes: "I have for many years read your books on the criminal mind, and have found your theories exciting and revolutionary!" He was especially taken with Jekyll's theory of "separating that part of a man's brain which deals with the evil in a man's soul." Jekyll quickly counters, thus elucidating his modernist philosophy: "I did not say the evil in a man's soul. You see, I do

not believe in the soul. This thing you call soul, is a figment of man's imagination. Man has invented this `soul' to help him get out of today's difficulties. I have no time for such things as souls, or religions. I believe in science and medicine-and only in them." Cross humbly disagrees, as he was brought up as "a firm believer in religion," and finds Jekyll's theories a bit disconcerting, cold, even "soulless." Thus is set up a key dialectic in Jekyll, which follows a similar binary in Stevenson's story, and which reflects a significant sociological struggle during the late Victorian era -the battle between entrenched, supernatural explanations of the universe and man's existence, as propounded by religion, primarily the various branches of Christianity, against the relatively new (and to the religious, "blasphemous") disciplines of scientific inquiry, medical experimentation and evolution theory, all of which irrevocably challenged the hegemony of religious explanations of the origins (and by extension) meaning) of life. This struggle, eventually "won" by the above-mentioned logic-based disciplines but by no means even today without controversy and challenge, figures prominently in Jekyll's own psychological make-up, and it might be seen that the good doctor's lack of "soul," however one wishes to define that ethereal concept, contributed to his eventual downfall. Getting to the nature of the visit, it turns out that Jekyll has come to claim the body of one "Timothy Green, who only five days ago mutilated and murdered a young girl," and has since hung himself in his cell. The viewer may wonder whether this "Timothy Green" was the deranged fellow seen previously molesting the (assuredly not "young") girl in the park, or represents merely another example of what are apparently ubiquitous sexual predators running loose in this sad city, where oppressive social mores have burst the seams of society, unleashing an army of lusty, rage-filled madmen. At any rate, this dead malcontent is to be utilized by Jekyll as a subject upon which to continue his experiments on locating and isolating the supposed "evil" in a man's brain, a curious if laudable goal which suggests that the good doctor is not as rational as he professes-his interest in a highly subjective phenomenon such as human evil implies a touch of the philosopher, and even the social crusader, lurking alongside the scientist and doctor. And it will be, of course, his "soul"- or lack thereof-which will figure prominently in Jekyll's tragic descent into his "lower" self.

Soon, Jekyll is lecturing his six medical students, preparatory to dissecting the killer's corpse and, hopefully, unveiling it's dark secrets. A reference to the killer's "past history of violence and sadism" sets up this body as metaphor for historical humankind, so its dissembling may indeed be fortuitous in clarifying the defects inherent in homo sapiens. Victoria Crenshaw (Jennifer Summerfield), the only female student in the group, asks the first, and most intelligent question in the ensuing discussion. Victoria is showcased in a carefully cropped two-shot, with another student (long-time Milligan colleague Gerald Jacuzzo as "Jeremy Brooks") looking somewhat judgmentally over her shoulder, so it seems clear that this courageous proto-feminist will feature prominently in subsequent events. "Victoria" is also posed to symbolize Victorian society, obedient and complacent yet struggling to announce its bold, courageous advances in several cultural areas."

Victoria elaborates on her query about the victim's age, as studies have shown that "a person's past affects the brain area," especially in the instance of "a history of violence since childhood." Again, a truth regarding the individual as well applies to the whole, as Mankind's violent past well predicts its future. Jekyll then shocks the assembled with a proclamation: "I have found a way to isolate, and therefore treat, the evil in a living animal's brain." (This revelation is stated via an impressive (and rare for Milligan) tracking shot) which begins on a close-up of Jekyll with his muse, the "evil" corpse, resting behind him; the shot slowly creeps around and behind the doctor until it focuses on Jekyll's awestruck students.) Of course this is an ancient, and most noble quest on the part of all good men - to attempt to solve the riddle of man's immutable and self-destructive malignancy, and if possible, to eradicate it. Yet Jekyll continues by claiming that his experiments on nonhuman animals such as guinea pigs and horses were successful, an annotation which dilutes his thesis greatly- and perhaps even hints at delusion or madness-for "evil," as stated in general consensus (premeditated) gratuitous violence towards others) exists only in human beings. Guinea pigs and horses do not rape, torture or kill others for pleasure-the very notion of contrived sadism on the part of a hamster or equine is laughable. Thus, Jekyll's "experiments" on these innocents could not conceivably prove anything, other than imposing quasi-legitimacy on

what may be an ulterior motive on Jekyll's part. This agenda becomes clear as Jekyll continues: "One day I hope you'll be proud to have been Dr. Jekyll's students." The "noble" doctor, after all, seeks above all else fame and acceptance from his peers- perhaps even glory - and thus the hubris of unchecked ego becomes a prime motivator for Jekyll. And what is evil but the exercising of the ego in the service of the self, ignoring all social precepts for good to the community?

The anticipated vivisection is interrupted by a visit from Dr. Jekyll's fiancee, Mary Ann Marsden (Gay Feld). Dressed in a flamboyant red dress, Mary Ann is first seen singing to herself and staring dreamily out the lab window, a portraiture which paints her as the typical Victorian belle, insipid and giddy, with her head in the clouds. Mary Ann chastises her betrothed for missing a promised luncheon date with her father, as well as their upcoming engagement party, mental lapses which suggest that Jekyll is less than enthusiastic about the upcoming marriage. Jekyll professes his dislike for Mary Ann's father, a renowned physician, whom he considers old-fashioned and against any modern medical discovery. More importantly, however, Jekyll's opinion is the direct challenge of a son in preparation to toppling an obsolete patriarchy. In an overt claim to independence, Jekyll again refuses the potential financial support of Mary Ann's father. Yet it is revealed that Jekyll is not so autonomous as all that - he still lives in his mother's house - and under the deceased matriarch's influence even now, Jekyll reveals himself to be of an essentially masochistic and dependent nature, an apparent irony which contrasts sharply with the stated dictates of his upcoming apotheosis. Still, the ever-acquiescent Mary Ann accepts her man, hypocritical bore that he is, exactly as he is; when she intones, "I would never try to change you in a million years," she again curiously references the unerring constancy, if not the beneficent evolution, of historical Man, which the unevolved female seems to find acceptable, even as he ignores, harasses and/or exploits her.'$

The anticipated dissection takes place, heralded by a shot of the corpse's cranium on a platter. Jekyll injects the deranged brain with his serum and shortly, part of it turns green, thanks to a simple but clever lighting effect, a nod to Milligan's theatrical training. Jekyll advises his students, "The darker

the shade, the more the evil," which may recall the colloquial notion of the "green-eyed monster" of jealousy. Post-op, student Malcolm challenges Jekyll, saying that these experiments tamper with the natural order of things- he states, "You're playing with things that are no concern of yours. God will punish you," before storming out of the room. Jekyll instructs the remaining students to dismember the corpse with axes and cleavers "to save time," an absurdity which serves to add an obligatory grindhouse gore touch to the scene.

Later, in the lab, Jekyll claims to have discovered the perfect formula to remove evil from the brain. He gushes, "Murderers, rapists, sex criminals, all will be able to be treated!" Smithers drops the beaker containing the formula, while Jekyll cuts himself on the glass. Jekyll's bossy sister Carla (Jacqueline Lawrence), enters the lab wearing a sexy red satin dress, and takes her brother away, dragging him by his bloody finger, a most overt sexual metaphor suggesting that this brother-sister relationship may follow the familiar Milligan formula of intrigue and incest. While trying to clean up the mess he made, Smithers manages to spill liquid on Jekyll's written notes, obliterating them. These awkward and sloppy plot points also allude to Smithers having grievous doubts about Jekyll's Utopian visions, as this assistant takes great pains to destroy them every chance he gets. This suspicion will be strengthened subsequently by two instances wherein Smithers has a chance to tell Jekyll of his misdeeds and chooses not to, further obscuring his participation in the fatal alteration of Jekyll's formula.

Later that evening, in another laughably sloppy plot point, Jekyll's monthly shipment of "vicious animals" for experimentation has been delayed, which he uses as the feeblest of excuses to try the new formula on himself. The transformation sequence, however, is effective due to a combination of believable performance by DeMarne, carefully wrought makeup, evocative horror cues and some discreetly-placed stage fog. Once monstrous, Jekyll immediately realizes that he needs the antidote to this devolution into pure evil, but alas, the antidote has been sabotaged by his trusted assistant, and its consumption only makes Jekyll even more of a monster. As the "new" Jekyll gathers his cloak, top hat and cane for a night of debauchery, he chortles maniacally, for in his heightened state of

awareness he has received a profound, if troubling insight, which had been blocked by his naive Utopian mindset-there is no antidote for human evil.

To prove this thesis, the film now descends to "the lower depths," and the scene changes to a dark, smoky saloon, in which a garishly-appointed singer (Julia Stratton, curiously billed by her character name, "April Connors") leads the patrons in a bawdy drinking song. (This sequence perhaps stands as Milligan's "biggest" scene, involving some complicated camera tracking and a large number of performers) in what appears to be an actual tavern of some sort.) After the song, the singer flirts with a male patron, who promises her riches if she will only go with him - her decision is interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Jekyll in his demonic state, who rudely holds the woman and tells her in no uncertain terms that she is to spend the evening with him. The singer refuses until Jekyll flashes a large wad of cash, at which point she acquiesces, an eventuality which falls in line with Milligan's philosophy that women are opportunistic whores. Continuing to restrain her, Jekyll coos, "You like your men fresh, don't you?," introducing the sado-masochistic dynamic which will feature prominently, if tragically, in the ensuing relationship. Jekyll moves to kiss the singer, but instead bites her lip, which causes the woman to blush, but not decry the potential for upcoming acceleration of violence - to Milligan, women are either base creatures who enjoy being brutalized by men, or else they are too dumb to know better. Jekyll asks the singer's name, which is April, suggesting fertility and innocence, two attributes which male evil considers fair game for exploitation. Jekyll then tells April to call him "Daddy," an affectation which reinforces the accruing master-slave aspect of the pair. As well, the appellation works as allusion to incestuous fantasies between an older man and a younger woman, and may also refer to Jekyll's admonitions to his fiancee regarding her father, the symbolic head of the medical establishment, expressing a secret wish to topple an ailing patriarchy (as seen) one of Milligan's key themes), and to finally become the "Daddy" of society. Finally, the notion that Jekyll is playing the "father," and April the "daughter," in this toxic bond clarifies the relationship as a strictly Sadean one, wherein their legacy is to destroy the world and end all hope for matriarchal redemption.

Jekyll asks April, "Have you ever heard of de Sade?," and the sado-masochistic element inherent in his designs on April becomes crystal clear - like the protagonists of that notorious writer, he seeks to dominate, torture and sexually violate the young woman before him, whose ignorance and relative innocence are her fatal flaws, and his weapons of control. When April innocently queries, "Who's he?," thinking de Sade may be another local libertine, Jekyll hisses at her, "He likes to do things to people - sexually," a generic notion which April does not find abhorrent. These exchanges are expressed via an excruciatingly tight two-shot which might almost be called a double-close-up, as only part of each face is shown. The torrid intimacy of (even ill-fated lust) is nicely expressed within; Jekyll looks down upon his prey as would a drooling wolf, and April looks up coyly, willingly, at her temporary master, oblivious to the dire fate he has planned for her.

Foolish April leads Jekyll to her bedchambers, where Jekyll immediately orders her around and physically hurts her, in order to quickly establish their dynamic; April, who has made a career of being exploited and pushed about by men, reluctantly acquiesces to this degradation, eerily mirroring the female's dire fate when allowing a stern patriarchal system to dictate her life course through brutality and tyrannical demands. Part of Jekyll's modus operandi is to alternately charm and denigrate April, mocking and disparaging her for the very traits which make her putty in maledom's hands. This parallels the hypocritical and problematic love/hate relationship men have with women in general, and with the "fallen" woman in particular, who represents all that is desired, and simultaneously loathed, in the human experience, and reflects these contradictions as they present themselves in the self-loathing male. Jekyll orders April to fix her a drink "like a good little girl," reinforcing her subservient position as well as her possible surrogacy as Jekyll's dream daughter, only to toss it to the floor - Jekyll's main objective seems to be to humiliate and frighten the woman. April, now seeing that she has solicited a madman, pleads to escape, and Jekyll coos, "I'll let you go-when I've finished with you," signaling that he is in complete control and April is, in fact, trapped within the worst possible manifestation of heterosexual interaction. Jekyll then reveals what men really think of sexually desirable women: "You're a cheap little slut! You know that, don't

you? You shouldn't be allowed on the face of this earth! You're scum!" April starts to cry, and Jekyll responds by beating her up -with the victim's emotional surrender, the beast called man has been unleashed.

Jekyll orders his "whore" to light a cigar for him, useful as metaphor for the erotic "inflaming" of the male phallus. Jekyll then makes April sit on the floor like an obedient cur (which is all a female is to a sexually tyrannical male), and to complete the inference, Jekyll makes his victim bark like a dog, an act which signals her complete humiliation, as well as verifying that this tryst has descended to the purely bestial. Further emboldened (and aroused) by April's abject surrender to his base demands, Jekyll burns April with his "inflamed" cigar, an act which stands in for the violent and painful implantation of the "burning" male sperm into the woman. Having thus completed this cruel mockery of domestic heterosexual bliss, with its inevitable undercurrent of physical violence and mental tyranny, Jekyll begins to disrobe April and, his lust inflamed, proceeds to pummel her with increasing ferocity. Suddenly, he stops, takes a breath and whispers, almost to himself: "Not now. It isn't time yet. We don't want to spoil it, do we? The first assumption one makes of this change in behavior is that Jekyll was quickly approaching orgasm with his sexuallyfueled violence, and wanted to abstain from premature ejaculation. The darker, likely more accurate thought is that Jekyll's ultimate goal was to kill April, thus achieving the ultimate male sexual release, yet did not consider the time or place right for this ultimate "sexual" conquest. Jekyll beats a hasty retreat, leaving April crumpled up on the floor, her face covered in blood, sobbing like a small child.

This extraordinary scene vividly illustrates heterosexual desire, Milligan-style, which is nothing more than cruel sex-and-violence games played between a sadist and a masochist locked in a dysfunctional bond, which leaves the victim (usually but not exclusively a woman) a defeated, humiliated and violated unfortunate. The notion that unchecked sexual arousal leads inevitably to blood lust is verified forthwith - as Jekyll returns home from his escapades with April, he encounters a streetwalker and attacks her viciously, leaving her for dead. The swirling camera which ends this scene may well stand in for Jekyll's emotional state, which is likely that

of ecstatic orgasm, as he has finally attained what he set out to achieve - the killing of the sexual object - thus clarifying that the end result of inflamed sexual passion is a lust for death, a most explicit depiction of the unholy wedding of Eros and Thanatos in the dysfunctional, even demonic heterosexual paradigm as delineated by Milligan.

The next morning, a hung-over Jekyll is awakened by sister Carla. Jekyll begins to recall his evil nocturnal adventures, and is overcome with remorse and shame. Carla dictates orders to Jekyll to change clothes, see a doctor and cancel his classes, all the while aggressively fondling him, obviously desirous of accessing the sexual beast which lies within her brother. Grasping him tightly, Carla pleads with her brother to return to the "loving man" he used to be, in a close-up which can only be called steamy. Carla's intentions are further given away by an (intentional or otherwise) Freudian slip - she pleads with William to postpone his experiments, "at least until after were married." Carla continues harping away, until Jekyll becomes physically aggressive with her, pushing her and butler Jensen out of the room. Looking in the mirror, Jekyll sees his evil side slowly growing on his face, this time without any pharmaceutical provocation -the look of horror in his face suggests that he is toying with the horrific idea that the evil in man may be a natural thing. (This notion of moral man encountering his- possibly superior - amoral self in the mirror was) as noted, also used effectively in Guru, the Mad Monk.)

The next day in class, Jekyll tells his students about a crime of "unusual violence" which was committed the previous night, wherein a killer used a knife to disembowel his victim, "cutting from the reproductive organs up to the chestplate." In addition, it would appear that the killer had "medical knowledge." In fact, Jekyll relates everything he knows about the sex crime, but for the salient fact that he was the assailant. Jekyll insists that it is urgent that they find a cure for this evil, for he surely knows that his own evil, unleashed, is out of control. Suddenly, Jekyll appears to be taken over by another entity, one which snarls and growls in a marvelous non sequitur, "What makes you think you're a lady?" Jekyll leaves the classroom, staring again into his mirror in an attempt to identify the face of evil. Smithers enters, and confesses that the formula which Jekyll has used was impure,

reconstructed from scribblings and guesswork, underscoring the Christian belief that any attempt by man to do "God's" work, in correcting the ruthless dictates of Nature, are doomed to failure, little more than punishment from a Sadistic deity.

Back in the classroom, Jekyll becomes increasingly unable to suppress his alter ego, which comes out in the form of criticism and arrogance - in other words, all of the egobased beliefs which Victorian society has so compulsively squelched. These rude, accusatory outbursts are, in their own way, as upsetting to the classmates as were Jekyll's physical attacks on April last night (although admittedly of far less consequence). Yet Jekyll is still utilizing a sado-masochism dynamic in his verbal threats, its sexual undercurrent reinforced by his picking of the one female student, Victoria, to single out and harass. Here, Jekyll emotionally and intellectually abuses a woman in much the same way as he sexually and physically tortured poor April previously, and as well challenges some cherished tenets of Victorian society. Jekyll begins by taunting Victoria: "You're privileged - to be a female medical student in this day and age!" Eventually unable to contain his true feelings about the autonomous female, Jekyll blurts out what his "inner self" thinks of uppity women: "We all know you should really be home with your snotnosed little brats!" Further clarifying his snide, misogynist opinion on the female's role in Victorian society, Jekyll snarls, "All women should be in bedto be used."

A mesmerizing production still from The Man with Two Heads (1972) depicts two demented creatures about to attack a restrained female with a syringe; this surreal composition captures the spirit of the film's incredible orgy scene, which depicts via surreal montage the vile duplicity beneath the facade of Victorian civility.

Later, in Jekyll's bedchambers, Carla confronts her brother about his recent deleterious change in behavior. Insisting that he has an obligation to his fiancee, his students, even his sister: "I worry about you, William - I worry so about you...," another not-so-veiled reference to an intense emotional, and likely romantic attachment between brother and sister. After Carla leaves, Jekyll stares yet again in the mirror, again seeing his other self struggling to break free. Aware of his unbearable cravings, Jekyll blurts out, "I must have more!" Like any activity or substance which promises abandonment of one's social morays, allowing a carefree lapse of personal responsibility, Evil is addictive. Once he has sated himself with more potion, the "evil" Jekyll visits Smithers, and kills him in a fiery holocaust which eerily mirrors the inferno of Christian trespass, the destination of all sinners.

Aroused with bloodlust, Jekyll returns to the pub where April entertains. As before, April sings along with a roomful of customers, in a scene so similar to the previous nightclub scene it may evoke deja vu, effectively

conveying the predictable repetitiveness of social activity. In fact, April looks none the worse for wear for her ordeal with the monster Jekyll, having apparently forgotten her near-death experience. Yet as soon as the music stops and April descends the stage to mingle with the audience, Jekyll appears and grabs her, forcefully dragging her away from the safety of the public eye. Taking April to her rooms, Jekyll produces a leather belt and whips April mercilessly, declaring, "I want you to remember this moment for the rest of your life!" Forgoing even the crude sexual foreplay which figured in their first meeting, Jekyll now wants to quickly implant the true nature of his interests, and reinforce the bond they have as partners in this grim sado-masochistic ritual. Quickly approaching orgasm from the tortures, and wanting to hold this moment of sheer ecstasy in check as he did during his last interlude, Jekyll darts out of the room and runs downstairs to another door, at which stands a gruesome, disfigured woman, who groans at him like an animal, telling him to depart. After flashing some money, however, the hideous misfit lets Jekyll inside, illustrating in Milligan's crude way that money gains access to anything.

What transpires inside that dark room is a hallucination almost indescribable -an orgy of sex, drugs and violence which contains, in microcosm, everything that was repressed in Victorian society, all however still functioning in society's lower depths, and accessible for a price. The montage contains fleeting glimpses of horrible, unearthly acts, all captured via Milligan's swirling camera, many of which are further clouded by billowing theatrical fog, underscoring the subterranean nature of the piece: Fancy men whip willing women, reinforcing the patriarchal credo; naked bodies grope each other, searching for epiphany in vile flesh; men with faces like beasts brutally maul hopelessly aroused women; a group of decadents forcibly inject a drug into the arm of a screaming female, assuring her descent into madness and degradation; a naked man is strapped against a wall, about to be violated anally; another man is tied to a bed, with curious cuts and stigmata burnt into his chest, marked by evil for termination; another man is burned with a torch; a man rides another like a horse; a man has his eyes and tongue gouged out by the accelerating violence, and yet seems in the throes of sexual ecstasy nonetheless.

This orgy sequence, one of Milligan's most astonishing set pieces, is a completely abstract scene which serves several allegorical functions. It depicts the duplicitous nature of Victorian society where, behind the pretentious social facade of moral righteousness, Man's lurid, petty and perverse lusts continued unchecked, always behind "closed doors" which symbolized the repressed, subaltern nature of that hypocritical, ultimately doomed culture. It also depicts the vaunted "Sexual Revolution," in full swing circa 1972, as an indiscriminate heap of anonymous, groping bodies, futilely searching for emotional satisfaction via debased and tawdry fleshly pursuits. As well, it acts as metaphor for the horrible runaway engine of endless human procreation, depicting human life at its most savage and debased, with torture, mutilation and sadism become indistinguishable from sexual release. Finally, the orgy is a man-made purgatory, a prison of stinking flesh for lost and damned souls, for what could be more terrible to the noble spirit of Man than endless, anonymous fucking? This orgy is the inferno, and one of Milligan's strongest single scenes. Although the orgy sequence is entirely new to this film, there is a line in the Stevenson story which evokes similar imagery-as Jekyll ruminates about Hyde's moral decay, his descent into the bowels of Victorian degradation, he notes, "This was the shocking thing, that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices."" This vivid allusion to a man-made purgatory of debased souls aptly describes the orgy room, when seen as metaphor for fallen man's inferno.

Next day, Victoria Crenshaw informs Jekyll that she wants to write an article for her hometown newspaper in Aberdeen, and desires his help. She plans to call it "A Day in the Life of a Woman Who Doesn't Belong," a title which implies that the autonomous, independent woman is still a misfit, or an enemy, in male-dominated Victorian culture. Soon, Victoria unwisely makes a pass at the good doctor. The groundbreaking feminist apparently still boasts a touch of the "old" woman, wanton and foolish, and is irresistibly attracted to the newly-perceived "dark side" of her mentor. The passion aroused in the "good" doctor by Victoria's advances has tapped into deeply suppressed feelings of violent lust for his midnight whore, April. Jekyll becomes ever more agitated (i.e.) sexually aroused) and finally attacks Victoria - as he does so, he even calls her April, as all women are interchangeable when it comes to sating male lust.

In yet another plot point borrowed from the 1931 Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde film, April Connors visits Dr. Jekyll at his offices, during the daytime, in order to ask his help with her sexual predator - apparently he had foolishly left his calling card in his medical bag. When asked for the identity of her assailant, April tells Jekyll that her mauler has no name- and it is only then that we realize that Jekyll's alter ego has never been called Hyde (or anything else, for that matter) -he is just another side of Jekyll (or if we respect Milligan's original title for the film, he may be dubbed "Mr. Blood." As his main objective seems to be using poisons in the bloodstream in order to create blood-soaked violence) he may just as well be called that.) Jekyll, of course, vaguely recognizes April, and when he sees her bruised and whipped back (yet another steal from the 1931 film), he shudders in horror at the ugly vision of his subaltern self and his works. Later, April frets in her room, with her friend Edna Mae keeping her company. April feels exhausted, and attributes it to stress and too much alcohol, but Edna Mae reminds her about a long weekend she has just spent with an insatiable Welsh sailor. Edna Mae soon runs out to fetch a new bottle of brandy, leaving April alone. April attempts to calm herself by smoking a cigar, but this brazen act of appropriating a time-honored, sexually potent male ritual summons immediate punishment - when there soon comes a knock at the door, April thinks it is Edna Mae having forgotten something, and she opens it, only to find the hideous Mr. Blood staring her in the face. Jekyll has "squealed" on April, of course, and Mr. Blood wastes no times picking up where he left off the last time -finally consummating his long-abstained orgiastic bloodlust, he decapitates the luckless sex worker.

Mr. Blood rushes home and tries to enter through the front door, but Jensen tells him to sneak around the back so he won't be seen. Here is the first instance of Jekyll's servant having knowledge of his employer's other self, and being complicit in the subterfuge, suggesting a potentially important relationship which is, unfortunately, addressed too late and too sketchily to be of any narrative value. Soon, Mary Ann, Carla, Oliver and the police arrive, and after a perfunctory chase, Mr. Blood is trapped on the staircase, that setting where so many of Milligan's tragic heroes suffer their final moral collapse. In one last act of devotion, Jensen the butler shoots his boss to death, unwilling to allow him any more suffering. In a most telling

parting shot, Jensen embraces his fallen master, and looks up towards the sky, perhaps reflecting that only "god" can improve the human condition, for only "god" can recall the capacity for mischief with which he saw fit to burden man.

William Jekyll, aptly portrayed by Dennis DeMarne in a criminally underappreciated performance, does indeed boast "two heads," as do we all - the sexual and the social, the spiritual and the fleshly, the moral and amoral, etc. Yet Jekyll's inability to eradicate his lesser selves, indeed his inability to effectively separate them, carries a clear message: the social or public or "better" self always also contains within it the anti-social, private, "lesser" self, which threatens to escape at any time, and when unleashed, becomes an all-consuming monster which will destroy all enemies, and finally, the self, its host. According to Milligan, in this unending battle of moral and psychological forces within man, the winner is clear: "Evil" constitutes the genuine man, while "Good" is the social phony. Early on, Jekyll even backhandedly admits his legacy, his curse, to his students: "Since Man was created, he has had this evil side to his nature." Milligan would merely add, "And he always will."

As for Milligan's adherence to Stevenson's story, it may finally be stated that although he took great liberties with some aspects, he added immeasurably more in other areas, the most important being that Two Heads depicts, gruesomely and vividly, what the story merely alludes to, and other films short-sell, the sadistic sexual abuse of Jekyll's dark half. Of course, for Milligan this is a key theme, which may be why this notion in Two Heads is so striking and memorable. To Milligan, all men are sexual predators, sexual violence is universal, and Jekyll's alter ego is not given a name, for he is archetypal - he is all men, he is everyman.

The inherently destructive momentum behind heterosexual attraction, and the intrinsic cruelty residing beneath all sexual activity, has rarely been expressed with more vigor than in Two Heads, and especially revealed in the tragic convergence of April and Jekyll. Although Jekyll is engaged to the vapid Mary Ann, has an uncomfortably close emotional tie to his sister Carla, and even courts the attention of his one female student, Victoria, it is

his relationship with April which ignites Two Heads and creates the bulk of the ominous sexual tension which inhabits the film. The child-like April comes across as an innocent, even after we realize that she offers her body to men in exchange for economic favors. She is innocent in that she does not grasp, until it is too late, what she really offers when she disrobes for cash-carrying sailors- her life, and her soul, both of which are what sexual predators are really after in casual, anonymous sexual trysts. Time and again, April seems to forget how quickly her willing sexual advances inflamed not gratitude or compassion in men, but disdain and violence - and this blind spot, her inability to sense the beast waiting behind the closed door, leads to her tragic downfall.

As well, the bouts between Jekyll and April illustrate several of Milligan's key themes about the noxious heterosexual paradigm. The male, with his arrogance, lust and tendency towards violence, will always attempt to gain dominion over what he perceives as the "weaker" sex, with often devastating results. Alternately, the female in the Milligan universe tends to be a manipulative, money-grubbing whore, who seems to invite her own destruction. This does not excuse the male's brutal treatment of them, but only illuminates that both sexes play a part in their mutually-ruinous dance of attraction, a fatal bond which is exemplified here, as elsewhere, in explicit sado-masochistic ritual which vividly reinforces the message. The strong-passive element in Jekyll and April's meetings also points up the inevitable power play which occurs when two emotionally- or sexually-charged individuals collide: in such cases, there is always a struggle for power, always won by the more ruthless and conniving, and in some wise courted by the losing party. As seen, this constant power dynamic within individuals often, in Milligan's world, takes on the garb of a sadomasochistic tryst, which exposes a tragic familiarity between individuals predisposed to dispensing punishment, and those seeking same.

As noted, alongside an exploitative, misogynist diagetic, Milligan often takes great pains to add, even obliquely, a feminist angle to the scenario (for instance, female medical student Victoria Crenshaw), and Two Heads is no exception. From a feminist perspective, the relationship between Mr. Blood and Ms. April acts well as metaphor for the essentially exploitative and

destructive bond between men and women in a male-dominated culture. Mr. Blood "buys" April's favors with a wad of cash which aptly symbolizes the social contract, and April agrees to the barter, only vaguely aware of what the exchange entails. In misogynist patriarchal culture, the solicitation of sex by the male, either through mutual agreement or economic transaction, also implies ownership of the woman by the male for the duration of the sexual exchange. As feminist author Andrea Dworkin states the case, "He owns you; he fucks you."20 Further, sex between man and woman in an oppressive phallocentric culture usually forebodes the moral, psychic and physical deterioration of the woman, as the act of possession tends to have an enervating effect on the owned-witness the rapidly deteriorating interaction between Mr. Blood and April, wherein April must acquiesce in evermore degrading, and dangerous ways to her "lover" in order to satisfy the demands of their "contract." The female "annihilation of the self" seems to be an intrinsic part of the sexual contract between man and woman in the current social climate. As Milligan so often declares, sex and violence are ineffably intertwined, even in the throes of ecstasy, and this view coincides with Dworkin's survey of the situation: "Sexual possession is a sensual state of being that borders on antibeing until it ends in death."" This notion of sex, on the part of the woman, being little more than a road to demoralization and destruction is strikingly expressed via Mr. Blood's systematic debasement, enfeeblement, and finally dismemberment of his obedient sexual "employee." In fact, Dworkin's description of the process expounds April's fate exactly: "The body dies, or the lover discards the body when it is used up, throws it away, an old, useless thing, emptied, like an empty bottle. The body is used up; and the will is raped."22 As Mr. Blood casually tosses April's severed head across the room, the true nature of man's sexual possession of woman is made crystal clear - man does not wish to cherish or love woman, but to annihilate her.

Stevenson's character of Poole, the devoted butler, appears in truncated form in Two Heads as Jensen. However, Milligan took the greater portion of Poole's character and transferred it to Carla, Jekyll's sister, which of course served Milligan's obsessive need to include a steamy, potentially incestuous relationship between siblings in anything he did. Still, Jensen adheres to his prototype's essential qualities- an utter loyalty to his master which is

precariously balanced with an obligation to his community. In shooting his employer, Jensen may, in fact, be the only truly moral character in the whole film. As for Carla, in addition to adding a slightly twisted sex interest to the already confusing sexual dynamics of Two Heads, as well as taking over a good portion of the butler's expositional duties, also clearly stands in for a mother figure for her brother, correcting and chastising him, but most of all fretting over him as would a doting, domineering mother.

Regarding the debate between Science and Religion, set up as the main theme at the film's start, it may slip by the casual viewer that, in fact, Science does lose in Two Heads, and "god" does punish Jekyll for his "sins," as he was forewarned by a defecting follower. This supernatural, neo-conservative reality saddles the film with a very reactionary "Victorian" moral - all trespass against the "natural" order will be punished by a vengeful fate. Not only sex, but knowledge, is bad, and indulgence in either assures the dabbler's destruction, and here we can easily discern the spirit of the artist, signing this work with his conflicted Victorian sensibility.

With Two Heads, Milligan achieves an admirable feat for a budget-restrained filmmaker, and mounts a fully successful Gothic melodrama with much to recommend it including, as discussed, a powerful script, a haunting verisimilitude and strong lead performances. As seen in earlier productions, and expressed almost to perfection in Two Heads, Milligan can create a very theatrical, yet believable micro-budget apocalypse by merely combining strong dialogue, a good performance, striking library music, a swirly camera and a discreetly-placed fog machine, an artistic feat unmatched by most other filmmakers irregardless of budget or resources. In fact, Two Heads uses the same library cues as heard in The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (and other Milligan product) including the same theme music, again using Roger Roger's "Dreaming Awake" and "Spell of the Unknown" from the Major Mood Music Library for several key scenes. One senses that with Two Heads, Milligan was really trying to go "straight," making a daring if reckless stumble into mainstream legitimacy. Although the credits misspell the source novel's author as "Robert Louis Stephenson" (sic), there is still a reverence to the spirit of outside source material not seen elsewhere in Milligan's work. As discussed, this may be due to the fact that

Stevenson's tale resonates so well with Milligan's essentially tragic worldview, including the story's rather dark conclusion, for as in all truly successful Milligan films, and most delightfully in Two Heads, evil wins.

Two Heads features some of the most frequent, and effective use of the "reverse angle" shots Milligan had perfected in previous films, in which (usually) two characters begin the scene at one position, and in mid-scene switch positions due to a reversal of the camera's placement. This signature editorial conceit consciously ignores the "axis of action," that imaginary line which the camera is never supposed to cross, lest the audience become disoriented as to the layout of the physical space being shown, and the relative position of the characters within. But Milligan wants the audience to become disoriented, to feel slightly upended, even threatened, by the felicity of his physical spaces- and he certainly wants the audience to see his characters from several points of view, which these clever shifts in polarity achieve exceedingly well. As Two Heads concerns itself primarily with the "two selves" of man (public/private) civilized/bestial, masochistic/sadistic, good/evil, etc.), the consistent use of these "reverse angle" scenes remind the viewer, even if subliminally, that there are two sides to every story, and most especially two sides to every human.

As with other Milligan horror films, The Body Beneath foremost, critical reaction to Two Heads has been overall somewhat negative, even among cult and horror film mavens: John Stanley called it "instantly forgettable," a curious reaction to a highly memorable film,23 and Michael Weldon dismissed it as "terrible," which begs the question of whether he actually saw the film.24 Sleazoid Express author Bill Landis called the film "mostly asleep," and added it was a "claustrophobic opus filmed in one room."25 While most of Milligan's "opuses" are claustrophobic, due to tight budgetary restraints and the filmmaker's proclivity for suffocatingly intimate scenarios, Two Heads is one of the most expansive productions Milligan ever mounted, with at least half a dozen locations, including a medical school lec ture hall, and an impressive night club setting replete with a dozen patrons. To suggest that Two Heads was shot "in one room" again suggests that Landis did not even watch the film - perhaps it was he, and not the film, who was "mostly asleep." Video Watchdog founder Tim Lucas found some things to like in

Two Heads, but puzzlingly stated that it bore "only the vaguest resemblance" to the Stevenson novella, when in fact it captures the spirit, if not the tedious plot points, as well as any other major film adaptation.26 Even better, Two Heads captures the essential thematic points of Stevenson's Victorian cautionary tale more profoundly and bluntly than any other film version which comes to mind. Further, the general consensus on internet movie databases and forums is that Two Heads is Milligan's worst, or near-worst film, again a strange response to what is arguably his masterpiece. Only Walter Gay seems to have really noted Two Heads's enduring charms, calling it one of Milligan's "most original and entertaining films."" Granted, personal taste plays a large part in judging film and other cultural texts, and a viewer may like, or dislike, any film for any reason, or no reason at all. Yet when one looks critically at all of the sustained strengths in Two Heads, the aesthetic and thematic energies which intersect perfectly in the film, it becomes something of a mystery when public reaction to it is lukewarm at best, and often hostile.

One possible reason could be Two Heads's refusal to treat the scenario lightly, to softsoap the underlying themes of the novella, which draws such a dark conclusion about Man. According to Stevenson and Milligan, Man's true self is Evil, not merely one tiny aspect which can be isolated, modified or quarantined. Evil is intrinsic (and unique) to the human species, and when his rigid social structures are allowed to collapse, the evil forces chained inside emerge to wreak havoc. Many adaptations of the story treat Hyde as little more than a cardboard movie monster, an aberration of the "true" urbane self of Dr. Jekyll, a biological/ psychological anomaly which can be readily exterminated, leaving the "good" doctor, and by extension humanity, relatively intact. Not so in Two Heads, which clearly states (as Stevenson likely intended), that the only way to finally eradicate the evil in Man is to eradicate Man. The other alternative, which humankind has adopted to such disastrous failure, is to endlessly figure out ways of bottling this malevolent force up, a laughable attempt at taming the untamable, which of course results only in the perverse energy building up until it bursts its tepid containment and runs amok, desolating man's best efforts at civilization via murder, war, genocide and boundless destruction. This dire conclusion is about as misanthropic a notion as one could conceive, and perhaps even

armchair film critics and undiscerning grindhouse patrons don't care to think of themselves as members of a defective, intrinsically monstrous species, the only conclusion one can draw from a thoughtful, careful viewing of Two Heads. Jekyll's systemic debasement of the poor whore April is calculatingly sadistic, unrelentingly brutal, and ultimately fatal, clearly reinforcing the logical conclusion of the free venting of the male animal's lusts. Rape and torture and murder are the essence of Man's wishes for his fellows (especially for his mothers and daughters and sisters), and The Man with Two Heads expounds this wretched agenda made manifest.

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Fleshpot on 42nd St. (1973)

Fleshpot on 42nd St. is an anomaly in the extant Andy Milligan canon, a rare title which can be classified as sexploitation. Most other available Milligan films can be at least loosely defined as horror-even the sexploitation-oriented Seeds of Sin (1968) boasts a Gothic horror template, and shares many similarities with Milligan's first bona fide horror film, The Ghastly Ones (1968). As such, Fleshpot of 42nd St. (henceforth referred to as Fleshpot) may provide some insight into earlier, lost Milligan's sexploitation efforts, circa 1996- 1969.

The reason for this latter-day sexploitation effort occurring when it did is likely based on many factors, of which three may predominate. The "extreme horror" genre which blossomed in the mid-1960s, and which skid-row producers like William Mishkin held onto for dear life as the sexploitation market became glutted with product, was rendered virtually obsolete by the early 1970s, as the major Hollywood studios appropriated the genre with blockbusters like The Exorcist (1973, d: William Friedkin). From then on, the horror genre was largely dominated by bland corporate product like the Friday the 13th, The Omen and Nightmare on Elm Street franchises, and the independents were by and large denied precious screen time due to inroads made by the majors. At the same time, the unleashing of mobfinanced hard-core pornographic features into the cinema mainstream (i.e., Deep Throat, 1973), virtually dictated that the 1970s would be the decade of strong sex films, at least for independent producers such as Mishkin, who were forced to return to genres they had recently forsworn. On a more personal level, Milligan was assuredly aware of the major success of the "art sexploitation" film genre, exemplified by the Andy Warhol/Paul Morrissey Flesh trilogy, and wanted to attempt his own "arty" sexploitation feature dealing with many of the same subjects. Thus, Fleshpot could be considered an example of an influence coming full circle since, as suggested

elsewhere, the Warhol/Morrissey films of this era were almost certainly inspired by Milligan's earlier sexploitation hits such as The Promiscuous Sex, The Filthy Five and Gutter Trash.

Although it is thus gratifying that this rare Milligan sexploitation effort was saved from oblivion, Fleshpot is by no means a major work, and is in many ways one of his weakest efforts. As a narrative, Fleshpot fails completely, as the plot is infantile, predictable and sloppily mounted. Expectedly, Fleshpot also shares the fatal flaw of all sex films, in that the obligatory sex scenes are tedious, dull and redundant. Fleshpot works far better when viewed as character study and celluloid diatribe, featuring two performances of note, and offering many Milligan philosophies and pet peeves.

The two main characters in Fleshpot are Dusty and Cherry, two of Milligan's most engaging losers, who share a great deal in common even though they are in many ways polar opposites. When we first meet Dusty Cole (Laura Cannon), she is shacking up with some dude named Tony in Times Square. (Laura Cannon gives Dusty an emotional depth unusual in this type of film, and although Dusty is a conflicted, contrary protagonist, more anti-hero than hero, Cannon's portrayal makes her never less than sympathetic.) Via a terribly unconvincing fight, we learn that Dusty gives unlimited sex to Tony, but refuses to pay the rent, get a job, make the bed, or even wash the dishes! In short, Dusty is a lazy slut, illustrating how Milligan sees heterosexual women, as opportunistic parasites who use sex as economic leverage. Yet there is something more to Dusty, although it comes out in strange, contrary ways. When pressed by Tony to find work, Dusty complains, "I gotta like a job or I just can't do it." While this sounds like the whining of a lazy person, it also sounds vaguely like the voice of the nascent feminist, struggling to find labor with meaning and dignity in a world which relegates women to the role of ... lazy slut. As if sensing this awkward stab at autonomy, Tony sets Dusty straight, reinforcing the strict patriarchal-capitalist program: "Everybody gotta work. That's what life is all about, don't you understand?" Dusty, however, feels that her contract with Tony, for unlimited sexual favors on command, is more than enough compensation in exchange for food and shelter-"I do my part so get off my back!"-herewith

another faint bleating of the emerging feminist, stating that the chronic sexual exploitation of her body should be worth something tangible to the supplier. Dusty cons Tony into having sex, thereby reminding him of her value as an economic asset. Tony aggressively performs cunnilingus on Dusty, an act which suggests servitude to the female, the worship of that which the male alternately exploits and venerates. As soon as Tony Leaves, the vengeful Dusty packs up to leave. taking most of Tony's possessions along with her.

Dusty takes the purloined goods to Sammy (Earle Edgarton), a very "Jewish" pawn shop owner. Dusty and Sammy haggle over the price of various sundries, with Sammy admonishing Dusty at one point: "All of a sudden, you know my business?" Finally agreeing to a deal which includes sex, the pair trot upstairs to Sammy's filthy office, leading to three vaguely anti-Semitic comments. When Dusty asks why the shopkeep doesn't leave his frigid wife, Sammy intones, "Nice Jews don't divorce." As Sammy retreats to the bathroom to wash up, Dusty begs, "Don't put any soap on it!," a hilarious reference to the perceived Semitic obsession with personal hygiene. Finally, Sammy carefully hangs up his trousers, saying "I don't want them to get dirty! They cost me twenty! I got them at Orbachs!" (This humorous scene may remind the viewer of a strikingly similar scene in Bloodthirsty Butchers) and each may be seen as sly digs by Milligan towards his very "cheap" producer Mishkin.) Soon Dusty is staring off into space, bored and disgusted, as Sammy aggressively performs cunnilingus on her. Here is another nod to men's servitude of women - or is it just dumb cunt-lust? Post-coitus, Dusty, a grifter at heart, takes the first opportunity to steal Sammy's money, and a diamond broach, and escapes the premises.

Enter Cherry Lane, one of Milligan's most astounding creations. As essayed by stalwart Milligan colleague Neil Flanagan (billed as "Lynn Flanagan"), Cherry Lane - the happy cross-dressing hooker with the heart of gold-catapults Fleshpot into high camp, and although the character never quite rises above cliche, he/she is still highly memorable. Wearing a hideous polka dot print dress and curly blonde wig (color: "Harlow Beige"), the big boned, pudgy-faced Flanagan looks more like a female clown than a "manly" woman, and could not possibly fool even the horniest, drunken fool

into thinking "he" was female. Flanagan's "Cherry Lane" is both an homage to and harsh critique of the notion of "drag," and Flanagan's shameless mincing completes the portrait.

Hookers Club: Transvestite hooker Cherry Lane (Neil Flanagan) chats it up with fellow sex workers (M.A. Whiteside, Dorin McGough) in Fleshpot on 42nd Street (1973) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Dusty first bumps into Cherry in a marvelous verite shot caught on the fly somewhere in Times Square. Standing next to the two, who chat gleefully, are two male passerby, originally unaware they are being filmed, and who flee in horror when they spot Milligan's Auricon staring at them, a very "real" moment which adds a breathless neodocumentary flair to the film. Dusty soon moves in with Cherry, and immediately wants to "trim" (rob) her first customer, Jimmy (Paul Matthews), until Cherry corrects her. As noted, Dusty is a conflicted character - hard and amoral - as she has had to learn to survive in a man's world using male tricks of deceit. To reinforce this dynamic, Jimmy whips Dusty ferociously with a studded leather belt as a cover of Lalo Schifrin's highly-syncopated theme to the Mission Impossible TV series plays on the soundtrack. Dusty calmly receives this torment in

exchange for cash, brutally illustrating Woman's ultimate role in a male-dominated political system -that of servant, slave, whore, and "whipping boy." Post-sex, a suddenly soft-hearted Dusty advises Jimmy on his failing marriage, telling him, in standard Milligan fashion, that he must take control of his wife - tell her who's boss- before the woman goes insane from lack of male direction. Add "Therapist" to the list of Woman's roles in serving Man.

One night, Dusty meets a "nice guy," Bob Walters (Harry Reems), and dares to fantasize that she might actually make a life with him. Anyone at all familiar with the Milligan ethos knows that any such presumption is doomed, but Dusty must find out for herself the fate her "creator" has in store for any female foolish enough to court monogamous heterosexuality. Bob takes Dusty to his house in Staten Island, which he takes care to mention was his mother's house, a conspicuous nod to matriarchal influence similar to Dr. Jekyll's situation in The Man with Two Heads. Dusty originally thinks of this rendezvous as a cheap pick-up - while Bob is getting coffee, she tries to steal his money but, not finding any, she decides to explore the house, and seems strangely moved by what she sees there - perhaps Dusty senses the abiding spirit of the matriarch in the gloomy domicile. Yet the moment in which Dusty senses that this might be more than just another quickie sex romp - that Bob might actually be "the one"- occurs as Bob invites her upstairs to bed. As the two slowly ascend that ever-fateful Milligan staircase, Dusty glances back at Bob, somehow aware at that moment that her fate is sealed. It is almost as if Dusty knows intuitively that one must first ascend in order to descend.

Adult film star Harry Reems was a perfect choice to express Milligan's idea of the dumb heterosexual male. With his stiff demeanor, dime-store insights and painful monotone, he characterizes the worst in the male animal - even though he is a sympathetic character, he comes across as little more than "a talking dick." Soon, the two are naked and rolling around on the bed, two handsome animals in rut. As have the previous males, Bob first services Dusty orally, paying worshiping to that moist mystery, that abominable chamber of horrors from which all human life emanates, that portal to the infinite to which patriarchal civilization owes its very existence. Here is where Dusty has no choice but to fall in love with Bob, for he is simply the

first "customer" who was gentle, and didn't beat her, humiliate her, exploit her. There is a rare political equilibrium in the sex exchange between Dusty and Bob which Dusty finds irresistible. Post-coitus, Dusty sits in the dark, smoking a cigarette, pondering the wisdom of letting herself fall in love with this suburban cipher. She shudders as she considers the alternative, and the scene fades out. The next scene fades in, showing clearly the alternative which awaits Dusty should she fail to manage this huge leap of faith - Cherry, the pathetic middle-aged drag queen, draped in a ridiculous thrift store costume, paints "his" nails, warbling, "Some day my Prince will come," preparing to venture outside to suck strangers' cocks for pocket change. This is the specter of Dusty's future, should she falter on this golden opportunity.

The heart of Fleshpot occurs on a gray, grim afternoon, as Dusty and Cherry share lunch at a creepy truck stop, one of the bleakest settings Milligan ever captured. Cherry asks about Dusty's new lover, and the starry-eyed girl utters the famous last words: "I like him!" Cherry tries to dissuade Dusty from her schoolgirl rapture: "I can see right now you got no discipline where your men are concerned. You gotta love 'em and leave 'em! That's the law of the Great White Way!" The two share evermore secrets and confessions and dreams, a closeness which prompts the spontaneous Dusty to kiss Cherry on the cheek. An embarrassed Cherry responds, "Before ya know it, we'll be bumpin' pussies out here in front of god and everybody!" Soon, Cherry picks up a truck driver, baiting him with crude sexual innuendo in a scene shot in suffocating close-up. As Cherry fellates the man, he grabs the hooker's wig, which promptly comes off, leading the horrified john to realize that the whore he hired was a male, a preposterous "revelation" considering Cherry's overt maleness.

Back at the apartment, the two continue their conversation. Cherry doesn't want Dusty to leave her, which prompts Dusty to ask the transvestite if he is happy: "Happy? Campin' all the time? I hide from the world in this get-up." Here is an honest, if sophomoric, confession of self-loathing from the homosexual, and/or the sexual freak, two genres which Milligan knew intimately. Reinforcing the connection between character and creator, Cherry reveals that he started dressing in women's clothes as a small child, and that

his mother, who thought the activity highly amusing, encouraged her young son in this life-altering pastime. Here Milligan again blames Mommy for the homosexual's tortured adult life and twisted habits.

Cherry encourages Dusty to keep her appointment to service the men at Jimmy's poker party. Dusty no longer needs the money - or the emotional thrill - of being desired by strangers for sex, but Cherry pleads with her to ply her trade just one more time, for they need the money. As Dusty agrees, Cherry dons a suspicious, even conspiratorial expression - is she being sincere, or is she hoping that this last tryst will somehow be Dusty's downfall? Of course, the poker party goes all wrong, as Jimmy the Sadist takes the opportunity to abuse Dusty heinously, in effect punishing her for the reckless act of submitting to the vile, base desires of the male animal. The group of men, with Jimmy at the helm, easily suggest phallocentric society in toto, their actions illustrating the wholly deleterious effect that society has on the autonomy and body of Woman. Yet the final straw comes when Dusty later overhears Cherry betraying her, calling her a filthy whore, ironically betrayed by her own "gender" (symbolic though it be). It is perhaps only at that moment that Dusty finally realizes that she is a filthy whore, and no longer wants to be.

Dusty makes haste back to Staten Island, to commit herself to Bob, body and soul, and hope for some vestige of domestic bliss. The two make cheap romantic vows to each other, sealing them with intercourse, and afterwards sharing a ritual bath to cleanse each of the taint of their previous lives. In the morning, Bob has to go to work, and Dusty insists that she walk him to the Staten Island ferry, trying on the role of "good wife." Sadly, this oblivious Milligan heroine is unable to realize that any such attempt to improve one's station in life will be swiftly and brutally punished. In a gesture which appears gregarious but which in fact is ominous, Dusty takes the diamond broach she purloined from the pawn shop and pins it on Bob. In doing so, Dusty marks Bob for doom by saddling him with her previous life of lying, theft, and debauchery, dragging this relative innocent down to her depraved underworld. Like carefree children, Dusty and Bob traipse down the steep public stairways of Staten Island's historic Corson Avenue, the sidewalk serving as yet another Milligan staircase on which protagonists suffer their

moral decline and meet their dire fate. Indeed Bob, seemingly in the throes of some childish delirium, is having such a wonderful time he neglects to stop at the bottom of the hill, and is promptly hit by a passing car at the corner of Corson and Westerley Avenues.'

The red Ford Maverick which does the deed in fact barely nudges actor Reems, in one of the most unconvincing accidents in screen history, so the impact of this embarrassingly simplistic plot point is largely symbolic. The long, red, phallus-like vehicle looks much like a missile fired from phallocentrism to punish any foolish attempt by a heterosexual male to fall in love with a "filthy whore." The efficacy of the car as symbol is reinforced by the fact that when Dusty and Bob first left the house, they walked by the very same car parked on the street, a chimera surely meant to foreshadow Bob's fate. When passerby ask Dusty if she knew the victim, she denies it and runs away, an act of sheer irresponsibility which further distances herself from the "good" world she had the audacity to strive for, while simultaneously denying her own significant complicity in Bob's demise. Soon, Dusty is back on 42nd Street, picking up men for quick cash, resigned to her role in life as a sexual handmaiden to patriarchy. As Milligan the misanthrope would sigh, "Once a whore, always a whore."

One notable theme in Fleshpot is that of female solidarity which, as seen, figures prominently in other Milligan films. While not biologically connected, Dusty and Cherry are "sisters in spirit," sharing for a time the same life, the same career and the same tribulations. Dusty and Cherry, during their heyday as roommates and friends, get a great deal of emotional benefit and moral support from each other's company. This girl-girl bond is, of course, ironic in that one of the "women" is actually a man, and makes the group more symbolic than literal. (One might coyly state that Cherry represents not the female sex but the female principle, albeit crudely illustrated.) It does, however, suggest a new paradigm for societythat of the emerging feminist woman merging with the male homosexual iconoclast to form a radical new social unit, the "found family" which may have significant socio-political power and meaning. As the "male" in this case is consciously donning traditional female signifiers for his public persona, the notion of female solidarity may stand, symbolizing any group of citizens

who have consciously chosen to break ranks with the male sex and its punitive agenda, even if servicing the same for brute economic survival. This may be where the proto-feminist cabal in Fleshpot becomes problematic, in that Dusty and Cherry service, and thus honor, men via their paid sexual favors, as opposed to the truly feminist conclave, which would likely eschew the company of men altogether, or at least relegate them to a subsidiary role. Perhaps Fleshpot is stating that in a phallocentric culture such as ours, there is little for a woman attempting emancipation to do but to serve the male sex in some way, since the system is rigged and, whether the woman likes it or not, it surrounds her as a symbolic and literal prison. This notion is illustrated succinctly by a production still from Fleshpot, in which Dusty walks down a street in Times Square, lost amidst a sea of men. The sole female in the photograph, she is virtually engulfed by the ranks of the male-dominated social system which dictates her livelihood, indeed her very life.

The notion of Dusty and Cherry as proto-feminist sisters is strikingly reinforced when they meet the Simmons Sisters (M.A. Whiteside, Dorin McGough) at a dive bar. Susie and Sally Simmons are pudgy, over-the-hill whores with big hair and sad print dresses, two chain-smoking, hard-drinking "tough broads" who are nonetheless fiercely devoted to one another - perhaps to a disturbing degree, for there is something about the Simmons which make them seem quite mad. Demonstrating at one point their audition for an Off Off Broadway show (for a "fag" director), the Simmons do a grotesque rendition of Shirley Temple singing "On the Good Ship Lollipop." Here, as in Seeds of Sin and The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, Milligan has characters reciting a children's song or nursery rhyme in order to indicate an infantile mental state, if not outright dementia. Here also is introduced the contrary notion of female solidarity as being a potentially debilitating bond, luring its members into dangerous emotional regression. Perhaps Milligan's point here is that all bonds are toxic, all alliances are doomed, but the better ones at least offer comfort, companionship and solace to its members against the cruel whip of patriarchal dominance.

Yet the primary lesson of Fleshpot is still a dark one, and may be the primary lesson of all Milligan cinema - Man is a low, vile creature, a "beast

by nature," and any pretense to better one's self will be swiftly punished by a vengeful, sadistic god. Dusty makes a fatal error in daring to fantasize that she could be anything but a lowly whore, for that is all women are in the Milligan universe, as the punishing hand of God soon makes clear. Stupid, simple Bob, the most amusing "dumb heterosexual male" Milligan ever manifested, has the temerity to fancy himself relinquishing his sacred role in patriarchy-that of whoremonger - and actually consorting emotionally with these lowest of creatures. Bob committed the cardinal sin of male-dominated society - he fell in love with a whore - and must be exterminated post-haste.

In the final analysis, drag queen Cherry Lane, at first apparently a sympathetic character in Fleshpot, acting as colleague and sister and fellow "female warrior," is subsequently revealed to be a duplicitous, conniving hag, whose dreadful advice to Dusty during her time of psychological confusion was a major factor in her future doom. Oddly enough, Cherry seems to have been the villain all along, fully in consort with the spiteful deities who torment the twisted flotsam of the Great White Way. In her garish dime-store costume and hideous fright wig, Cherry may in fact be a clown-demon, a supernatural, symbolic creature like her predecessors Magda, Corky, and the Harpies, sent to earth by a peckish god to intervene in the lives of Milligan's hapless mortals. Even more ominously, Cherry Lane maybe nothing more than an agent of the male collective, sent as spy or mole to infil trate the underground world of the female sex worker in order to sabotage any nascent attempts at female solidarity-in effect, a cross-dressing union strike-breaker.

Young prostitute Dusty (Laura Cannon) seems lost amidst a sea of men in this location production still from Andy Milligan's last great sexploitation film, Fleshpot on 42nd Street (1973) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Fleshpot can certainly hold its own with Milligan's other, seemingly endless treatises on life's losers. The title itself is brilliant and highly evocative. A "fleshpot," in modern usage, stands for a business or group of businesses which cater to the satiation of human vice, particularly those of a sexual nature. The "Fleshpot on 42nd Street" is the combined strip of movie theaters, strip clubs, dirty bookstores and prostitute clusters which define that region of mid-town Manhattan, catering to male prurient interests-with Dusty and Cherry being two valued employees of that capitalist enterprise. However, earlier definitions of the term offer even more insight into its origins and possible deeper meanings. A fleshpot may also refer to any bodily comfort or pleasure, and was for many years considered a synonym for luxury, especially that coveted or envied by others. Finally, in the early

20th century a fleshpot was literally "a pot for cooking meat," a notion which humorously mirrors its more modern sociological function as a location for the exploitation and "consumption" of (largely female) flesh to satisfy the gluttonous carnal appetite of postwar America.

Where Fleshpot fails is as narrative or art-piece, but these flaws are all but compensated by the unending stream of witty and snarky bon mots emanating from the mouths of its characters, who seem to relish the chance to pontificate, whether the situation calls for it or not. The subjects of these scattershot diatribes range widely, but include New Jersey: "Did you ever know anyone from there who wasn't (a jerk)?"; Staten Island: "I took the ferry over, took one look, and came right back"; aging: "America ain't no place for old folks. I bet in ten, fifteen years they'll be suggestin' camps for the aged"; politics: "If Nixon gets in again, it'll probably be a police state"; law enforcement: "It's getting' so you can't suck a cock in this town without some cop lookin' over your shoulder"; delusion: "It ain't easy bein' a sex symbol"; religion: "I haven't met an Irish Catholic yet that wasn't fucked up"; race relations: "Don't let the niggers hear ya"; economic survival: "I hustle for a living. Everybody does"; morality: "Didn't your mother ever tell ya that good girls go to heaven, and bad girls go to Tiffany's?"

As a straightforward reference to the sexploitation genre of a decade previous, Fleshpot succeeds well, but as an attempt to fashion a Warholian, Flesh-like art piece it fails miserably. References to rough sex and hard drugs come across as perfunctory, uninspired and underdeveloped. Transvestite Cherry Lane is strictly from the older generation, more in keeping with the flaming queens of Vapors than anything the "new" sexual revolution had created, a comical renegade from the burlesque era. During Dusty's emancipation from her lover's apartment, a strange cover of Dave Brubeck's monumental avant-garde jazz hit Take Five plays on the soundtrack, a feeble attempt to insert modernity into what is ultimately a pedestrian, if memorable, grindhouse outing. And the elemental, predictable script offers no real insight into Fleshpot's characters, as complex and idiosyncratic as they are, and here is where Milligan really dropped the ball. As Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford lamented, "The subject matter had Shakespearean potential, but Andy goes for cheap Tennessee Williams angst,

which betrays his Off Off Off Broadway background.'" With the filmmaker's intimate knowledge of the wide range of human flotsam which inhabits the fringes of a decaying urban environment, he could have surely come up with more interesting characters than the predictable, stereotypical ones which populate Fleshpot. When Fleshpot was released, one of its advertising taglines was "See The Underground Superstars!" It would thus appear that Milligan and Mishkin were consciously courting the Warhol underground/ arthouse crowd for the film, a conceit which surely failed when theater patrons saw how sloppy, infantile and verbose it was. Moderately successful as a grindhouse product, Fleshpot was purportedly released in both R- and X-rated versions, the hard-core version including a penetration scene missing from existing R-rated prints.'

However, aesthetically, Fleshpot is stark, unique and compelling, capturing Milligan's verite style at its best, which is why this flawed yet endearing film boasts so many fans. Tim Lucas noted, "The film has a gritty, low-rent, pseudo-documentary vitality."4 Walter Gay observed, "The film's threadbare settings and alternately stark and murky lighting create an unbelievably scroungy cinema verite atmosphere.'" Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford astutely surmised, "The film remains an affective portrait of a real-life soap opera situation, a half-brilliant, genuinely alienated relic of its time and its maker."6 All in all, Fleshpot has much to recommend it, and suggests that Milligan's other, lost sexploitation films can be nothing short of fascinating.

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Blood (1974)

It is a shame that Andy Milligan's 1974 fantasy-horror outing, Blood, is not more wellknown, for it is one of the filmmaker's most unusual works, with much to recommend it. Gathering a group of traditional horror film icons (vampire) werewolf, hunchback, carnivorous plant, etc.) to form an archetypal dysfunctional family, Milligan then uses this surreal social unit to fashion a striking satire of one of his favorite muses-the late-era Victorian family in upheaval. Blood takes place in 1884, resting squarely in the middle of the late Victorian era, and takes great care to touch upon several prevalent social themes of the era. As the main credits roll, mournful church bells toll. Their melancholy call suggests the end of religious hegemony, an eventuality which augured in the devastating moral self-examination of the late Victorian era, a cultural shock wave which caused no end of grief and mischief to the population. Soon, the bells cease, replaced by the roar of a hard wind. In the Milligan universe, this can be nothing other than an ill wind, which may announce the utter desolation of a society - sans religious surety-now lost and alone in godless nature, unsure how to achieve moral resurrection.

Two men converse as they climb a cold, unforgiving stone stairway towards a colonial house, hinting that Blood will again utilize Milligan's frequent "rise and fall" motif, depicted by characters confidently ascending, then traumatically descending sets of stairs, tragedies always in sync with their moral collapse. Subsequent conversation reveals that Dr. Orlofski (Allen Berendt) is renting the house from its landlord as a new home for he and his unseen wife. The overbearing Orlofski describes his wife thus: "Daylight doesn't agree with her. In fact, more than five minutes of direct sunlight could possibly kill her!" This odd admission reinforces the notion set up by the patriarch's dismissive attitude, that "The Orlofskis" are misanthropic, anti-social creatures ("My wife and I don't go out"), who will

surely have a negative impact on their community. Madame Orlofski's apparent aversion to sunlight foreshadows a more significant truth, that the Orlofskis are threatened by, and thus enemies of the natural world. They are, in short, unnatural. During this conversation, Orlofski assumes a stern, even cruel attitude towards the hapless landlord, setting himself up as a trademark Victorian paterfamilias, a stern disciplinarian who quickly establishes his tyrannical hegemony over another, whom he sees as mere "help."

After harshly ordering the landlord off his own property, Orlofski rushes to the back door of the house and opens it, revealing the reason for his haste - accompanied by a gust of vile fog, three weird people burst through the door, carrying what appears to be a corpse draped in black - as will be seen, this horde of misfits, cripples and deviates represents the real Victorian family, a monstrously incestuous and dysfunctional cabal of occlusive degenerates, largely unseen and unacknowledged by society at large. Orlofski applies some sort of medicine to the now-moaning figure, lifting up its veil to reveal a hideous, grimacing face that looks like little more than a skull covered in melting flesh. This first scene marvelously depicts the hypocritical nature of the Victorian family. The civil, if brusque social amenities of the first exchange, presided over by a well-dressed and well-heeled patriarch, hide the gaggle of grotesque freaks who slither in the back way, unseen by the world at large. According to Milligan, the real Victorian family is a cruel hoax on the historical record, a flock of deranged monsters whose moral crimes, hidden from society at large, are revealed in their domestic lives, indeed in their distorted, twisted personages. Although the identity of these people as yet remains unrevealed, it may be assumed that the black-draped figure near death is the family matriarch, another of Milligan's recurring parental "monsters" who are kept alive - most importantly beyond their natural span- only by the chronic injection of substances both supernatural and distilled from the "blood" of the community. As seen in Blood and elsewhere in the Milligan canon, the late Victorian family was a hallowed social unit rendered obsolete before its time, and kept unnaturally alive by the infusion of ideology both vile and demonic.

This scene cuts to a far more familiar setting - a well-dressed Victorian couple sitting next to a roaring fire, drinking tea and discussing domestic affairs. The startling contrast between this scene of tranquil civility, as opposed to the previous one of horror and chaos, illustrates the dichotomy between the private and public lives of Victorian (indeed all) families, the antithesis between the perceived facade of ordered domestic life set against the secretive, traumatic behind-thescenes machinations of the involuntarily-collected individuals, who spend great effort to hide their crimes and tribulations from the outside world. Between the couple sits a vase filled with yellow roses, an obligatory Milligan icon suggesting a desperate attempt at decorum in a morally devolving enclave. The man is Orlofski, now much calmer and, in fact, quite charming. The woman is Regina, his wife (Hope Stansbury), resplendent in a voluminous red and white dress which bespeaks a larger-than-life - if conflicted and conservative - personality. The fire, so iconic to this setting and so soothing to the couple, eerily foreshadows their eventual consumption by the very same element, burst out of containment by its masters' actions, unleashed perhaps in order to punish them for transgression.

Theatrical poster for a curious double bill: Legacy of Satan, Gerard "Deep Throat" Damiano's stab at art-horror, with one of Andy Milligan's Staten Island mini-epics, Blood (1974).

As Regina passively knits, dutifully playing the role of the good Christian woman, Orlofski men tions an upcoming visit to his lawyer, whom he believes is stealing their "legacy." Regina counters that they should not have stayed in Europe so long, allowing their business affairs to suffer in the hands of untrustworthy others. Orlofski reminds his wife, "You know we couldn't come back until we've mastered the serum for your condition." It is only after this curious reference when the viewer confirms that the hideous melting corpse seen in the previous scene was, in fact, Regina, rendered

virtually ex sanguine before being revitalized by this special "serum." The startling contrast between the gruesome melting skull and the classical beauty of the "renewed" Regina underscores Blood's theme of the diabolical resuscitation of obsolete monsters, unnatural acts which can only end in disaster, and which stands as viable metaphor for the calamitous juggernaut of the extended family, to Milligan perhaps the most monstrous social organization ever concocted. Referring to individuals as yet unknown, Orlofski reminds Regina that in this new environment, "They might not even survive at all." Can he be referring to their children? If so, the uprooting of the Orlofskis from old Europe to new America would indeed be traumatic to their offspring, as the U.S., even in this time period, was already largely devoid of social, creative or intellectual nourishment, and no place to raise a child.

A servant named Orlando (Michael Fischetti) enters. He appears to be a midget, for he stands only about half as high as his employer-he thus, rather amusingly, illustrates the "low" social standing of the servant class in the late 1800s. Orlofski reminds Orlando that this house is only a temporary respite, and that soon they will move to the "house which my father left me," yet another in a long line of Milligan references to characters being beholden to a forbearer for their current largess, another nod to the conspiratorial impact of the extended family on society at large.

In the kitchen, Carrie (Patricia Gaul), apparently a maid, and Orlando prepare the evening meal, along with a bizarre, deformed grotesque named Carlotta (Pichulina Hempi). Carlotta is the first abstract character in Blood, and her presence rather comically symbolizes the morally and intellectually monstrous offspring emanating from debased late-Victorian society. Regina walks into the kitchen, where she encounters a horrifying scene - Carrie is holding a cross over a plate of food, attempting to bless it via prayer. Regina recoils in horror, as she is an enemy of religion, which she sees as a direct attack on science, that alternate "religion" which, through Orlofski's mysterious serum, is the only force keeping her alive. (A marvelous close-up of Regina reveals that she carries red and yellow roses in her hair, thus encapsulating the Victorian imperative, and its facile charade of civility, in toto.) Regina demands that Carrie never produce the vile cross of Jesus in

her presence again, but the bold maid counters, "I have a right to my own beliefs," defending her claim to religious faith even in a world intent on forcing modernity upon her. Here is an early instance of a prevalent theme in Blood, of course also a major theme of late Victorian culture-that fierce debate between the comfortable historical imperative of religious dogma and ritual, against the newcomer to the intellectual scene - Science - with all of its stated and inherent threats to the established moral order, heretofore relying largely on faith and magic to enforce its law, and explain the natural world.

When Regina reminds Carrie of their class distinction -"As long as you are a servant in my house"- Carrie challenges this arbitrary social demarcation with a surprising revelation: "I am Doctor Orlofski's assistant-and I do you a favor by helping out with the household duties." Carrie has somehow fallen from the professional to the servant class (rather precipitously, as it will turn out), and one wonders whether moral transgression was one-if not the primary-cause. Regina, of course, sees no viable difference between the working class and the servant class, being herself an esteemed, if insecure, part of the ruling class. As Carrie leaves the kitchen, carrying the evening repast, Regina maliciously knocks it on the floor, then ordering "the maid" to pick it up, thus reinforcing their class distinctions. Later, in the dining room, next to a large vase of yellow roses, the imbecilic Carlotta places her hand over a lit candle until she burns it and screams in guiltless wonder. Orlando admonishes her: "How many times have I told you not to play with fire?" Again Milligan uses fire as the element to convey the pain of moral transgression, i.e., the wages of sin. It is also interesting to note that the two elements of the ancient art of palingenesis-the rose and the flame - are conspicuously set before the audience, a clue perhaps to the possibility of rebirth of moral transgressors through atonement and repentance.'

Carrie brings Orlofski a drink in the parlor. As a raging fire punctuates their obvious sexual chemistry-and foreshadows their future destruction-the two carry on a most revealing conversation. Orlofski first apologizes for his wife's boorish demeanor, revealing the reason(s) for her antisocial behavior: "Her father spoiled her as a child. Perhaps if I had been more strict with

her...." Here is stated Milligan's philosophy that men must always assert their dominance over women, lest they get the upper hand and become mentally unstable monsters. (One cannot help but feel that this crudely sexist doctrine is in some part a belated plea to Milligan's own passive father, who refused to intervene in his wife's monstrous behavior towards their children, Andy included.) The subject turns to an as yet unseen wound on Carrie's leg, which is worsening. The moral disease within the Orlofski household has infected Carrie, manifested via an assuredly gruesome malediction which graphically illustrates the poison coursing through the veins of its bearer. Carrie has been branded or "marked" by this occult affliction, as she too is complicit in the ethical depravity of the household, through lust for her master, as well as other possible crimes as yet unnamed. The loathsome leg is her own "Scarlet Letter." Significantly, the audience cannot see this physical manifestation of moral decay, for Carrie's leg is hidden by a grouping of yellow and red roses, which loom ominously in the foreground, again symbolizing the puerile facade of the Victorian family, with sublime emblems of innocent nature hiding the moral decay lurking therein. The two next refer to poor Orlando, who apparently has lost both legs to the same affliction, a tragedy which reinforces the omnipotence of moral law manifested physically within this diabolical social unit. However, Orlofski is confident that Carrie's malady can be stayed before amputation is necessary; he boasts, "We know more now...," alluding to his faith in the omniscience of science, but the spiritually-attuned Carrie counters, "Not that much...," doubting science's innate ability to counter the moral evils which undermine the adventure of Man.

Carrie then sternly tells Orlofski, as would a wife or lover to her mate, to retire to bed in order to store energy towards tomorrow's tasks. The sexual tension between the two has grown so precipitously throughout the scene that when Carrie breaches the traditional servant-master etiquette it does not faze either party, or the audience. Orlofski and Carrie share a long, meaningful glance into each other's eyes. Orlofski gingerly takes Carrie's hand and kisses it; Carrie withdraws the hand and strokes her chin with it. After Orlofski exits, Carrie breaks down in tears, and beseeches her spiritual mentor, the Virgin Mary, to rescue her from this living hell. The stress of the (possibly unrequited) love for her boss, along with the pressures of her

responsibilities as the primary organizer of this household, are too much to bear. Moreover, Carrie suffers because she lusts. As a woman caught between the moral excursions of religious superstition and the intellectual rigors of reason, she loathes her lusts, feels herself a corrupt creature because of them -but cannot overcome them. She thus encapsulates the late Victorian moral dilemma in a very pretty -if agonized -nutshell, with the disintegration of her leg a vivid illustration of this insoluble dilemma, and how it may cruelly decimate its owner. Indeed, perhaps Carrie's limb is infected precisely because she has "one foot" in the faith of the old religious order, and the other in the worship of science, this clash of cultures manifesting itself in a physical affront which burns like acid, eating away its host. Carrie's affliction, at least partly a result of her service to Orlofski, may also be seen as a masochistic sacrifice to her "master," and thus Orlofski and Carrie may also comprise a manifestation of the Father-Daughter cabal of Sadean theory, a sexually debased couple determined to destroy the family through their lusting after socio-sexual taboo, and conspiracy against mother (Regina) and son (Orlando).

In the cellar, Orlando, Carlotta and Carrie unpack and assemble various scientific equipment. Carrie is surprised that Orlando has second-guessed her recent fight with Regina, but Orlando reminds her, "We've been together a very long time, my love, we think as one," a most interesting comment on the heterosexual couple seen as a single socioeconomic and intellectual unit. Orlando mentions unpacking "the plants," who are probably "quite thirsty" from their long trip. In one corner of the cellar is a ramshackle hothouse immersed in thick fog and filled with strange plants. Meanwhile, upstairs, Orlofski and Regina retire to bed, and share some forced pillow talk: "Lawrence, I love you." "I know you do." "Lawrence, do you love me?" "Go to sleep." "Do you?" "Yes..." Regina's begging for emotional devotion is as pathetic as is Orlofski's dismissive declaration, which could only mean something to the deluded or desperate. Regina asks Orlofski for a kiss, and begs for lovemaking, which Orlofski refuses, being emotionally dead to, if not wholly repulsed by, his wife. Regina knows that Orlofski thinks only of Carrie, and her ardor turns sour. "Oh Lawrence, I hate you!" This scene captures succinctly, almost in shorthand, Milligan's comic-strip view of the accursed heterosexual adventure, which seems to consist of equal parts

pathetic begging for emotional attachment, and being forced to offer same attachment. One partner begs for love, while the other withholds it. Neither act is born of genuine feeling, both being neurotic in nature, so both are doomed to failure and frustration.

Back in the cellar, Carlotta is now strapped to an operating table, with tubes attached to her limbs. Her blood is being used to feed the bizarre plants. Carrie and Orlando perform dark alchemy while discussing the sad fate of Carlotta, who was a bright and happy child when they took her from an orphanage in Budapest. Discussing Carlotta's horrible mental deterioration, Carrie notes, "The brain can have blood drained from it just so often, and then it begins to malfunction." Carrie mentions that the plants have grown larger and stronger since being transplanted to America. Orlando touches one to investigate, and the suddenly animated leaf bites him. These somewhat abstract carnivorous plants, inserted rather awkwardly into the scenario, seem poised to act as an illustration of evolutionary theory, a decidedly hot topic in late Victorian culture thanks to the scientific revelations of Charles Darwin. Further, these plants, doted over by these caretakers and of obvious importance to the Orlofskis, may be seen as their surrogate children, their growth predicated on the blood of others (Carlotta), and able to thrive in a morally bankrupt environment (America).

The heart of Blood occurs early on, in a revelatory scene in the law offices of Carl Root, executor of the Orlofski estate. The lawyer Root (John Wallowitch)2 is drawn broadly and comically, with a snarling lisp and a ludicrous ring of gray hair surrounding a balding pate. Root is a conscious homage to the shyster attorney stereotype of the Victorian era, as vividly sketched by Charles Dickens, among others; here, Root may remind us particularly of Dickens' Tulkinghorn (Bleak House) or Dodson and Fogg (The Pickwick Papers). Boldly and shamelessly unscrupulous, Root all but confesses his mercenary and fraudulent agenda before all he addresses, a dire economic force hopelessly out of control in a culture which has foolishly allowed such rude beasts to practice their art of deception unfettered. Root is first seen telling his assistant to tack on another $75 to an old woman's legal fees, not because he has performed any task earning the cash but because "she can damn well afford it," crisply encapsulating the

lawyer's modus operandi -billable hours, accountable to none. This declaration is captured in close-up, underscoring its significance.

In the mahogany-paneled lawyer's lobby, a memorable scene follows. As Root's pretty young assistant welcomes Orlofski, a small child darts across the screen, and an elderly man sits waiting, seemingly agitated. This all-too-brief sketch uncannily captures a Victorian moment, an impressionist sketch which evokes the journey from childhood through old age, the dark halls of the lobby that void through which all life must pass.3 Orlofski is immediately taken with Root's pretty young assistant. Asking her name, the young woman announces it proudly-"Prudence Towers"-in a well-lit close-up which connotes this character's importance to Blood. For Prudence Towers (Pamela Adams) will be a most significant force in the proceedings, primarily for good but with traumatic consequences. Dressed conspicuously in blue, in stark contrast to the conservatism of the red-cloaked Regina and Carrie, Prudence is thus declared a force for liberalism, modernity, progress, and Orlofski for one is intuitively aware of her immense potential to forge constructive change. (Orlofski is also a bit of a cad) as he hits on every young woman he meets.) This reinforces his tryst with Carrie, that Orlofski seeks a political connection, with obvious sexual overtones, with young women in an effort to recruit them as surrogate daughters, the better to forge a father-daughter cabal with Sadean overtones, in an attempt to overthrow the domineering matriarch, Regina.

As hinted at earlier in the exchange with Carrie, Orlofski reveals himself to be a sexual predator as he shamelessly flirts with a clearly-flustered Prudence, and afterwards admits that he needs her as an ally against Root. Orlofski's power over women evokes the legend of Dracula the vampire, who would hypnotize and seduce his female victims before enrolling them in his legion of the undead. However, Orlofski never gets the chance to conspire with Prudence, for Root bursts into the lobby, of course horrified to see the unannounced Orlofski. Root, caught with his pants down, begins to tell Orlofski the dire state of his estate thanks to his nefarious dealings. Firstly, he sold the father's house, for little money and against Orlofski's orders. Root further confesses that he made bad investments with Orlofski's money: "I guess I should have checked them out a little more, I didn't know

they'd go bankrupt so fast...." In short, Root has embezzled the entire Orlofski estate, albeit legally as he was given the power to do so: "I have complete control over your late father's estate as executor to the will." Here is the attorney-at-law's prime motive laid bare, showing the lawyer-client contract as, for all intents and purposes, a license to steal.

Root goes on to remind Orlofski that his surname is a taken name, as the original family name was Talbot. The male Orlofski, at least, is thus revealed to be the latest in a long line of werewolves, a cliche horror plot point which may be nonetheless portentous. More shocking is Root's revelation that they reside in the town of Mortavia. Mortavia of course, was the desolate island location of Guru, the Mad Monk, which took place in the 1400s. Here, it is meant as a stand-in for a suburb in late 19th-century America. This revelation does not make Blood an inadvertent sequel to Guru, but rather, a distant cousin, with "Mortavia" serving as Milligan's playful mythologizing of his beloved residence, Staten Island, and effectively standing in as a generic - if in his case quirky - manifestation of "Anytown, U.S.A." Root has no problem threatening Orlofski with this shared secret: "You wouldn't want your real name to be discovered now, would you?" Orlofski counterthreatens: "You forget, Mr. Root, that I have all of my father's traits inbred in me, so take care," setting up the anticipated emergence of the Talbot werewolf personality. Finally, Orlofski loses control, and attacks Root. Prudence intervenes and sends Orlofski on his way. As Orlofski departs, he covers his face, for he appears to be turning lycanthropic, devolving into the beast that he really is. As in so many Milligan interchanges, here a discussion degenerates into an argument which quickly turns to violence, ultimately invoking the bestial impulse to kill.

At home, Carrie answers the door in a gingham dress, and lets in Jonathan (David Bevans), a dashing young man with a duffel bag, apparently a sailor returned from sea. Carrie's enthusiastic, highly emotional reaction to his arrival suggests a former lover, but as she molests him furiously, she states that Jonathan is "not the little brother I used to know," and we are once again in familiar Milligan territory -the reunion of brother and sister who share a long, dark sexual history. It seems that Jonathan has been to San Francisco and to sea, both likely codes for clandestine gay

activity, a notion reinforced by his subsequent admonition that along the way he "forgot a lot." Jonathan sits down on Carrie's bed, and Carrie sits coyly on his lap. Jonathan kisses Carrie on the nose, as he states, "I'm quite the lover, you know." Carrie begins to say, "Oh, I know..." but the scene is cut, probably to omit the confirmation of an incestuous past which surely followed. The viewer's hunch is confirmed nonetheless by the following shot, which shows the two staring longingly into each other's eyes, and sharing a passionate kiss. Carrie tells Jonathan what she's been up to as assistant to the Orlofskis, and confirms that the bizarre plants in the basement are the source of the serum which keeps the family matriarch alive. Regina is, in effect, cannibalizing her surrogate children in order to continue her own nefarious existence - a recurring Milligan trope. Jonathan insists on inspecting Carrie's bum leg, and is horrified by what he sees. He wants to take Carrie away from this horrible place, but she dissuades him for the time being. As the two descend two flights of portentous Milligan stairs, they arrange a future meeting, but the astute viewer knows by now that any peripheral character which has descended so far in a Milligan charnel-house is not long for this world.

Suddenly, Regina approaches Jonathan from out of nowhere, and drags him back up the stairs, a truly ominous sign. To verify the significance of these stairways to doom, when the two reach Regina's bed chambers, the woman is out of breath, wheezing and sighing, "There are too many stairs to climb!" Indeed. Jonathan and Regina discuss Carrie and the unusual situation in the Orlofski household. At midpoint in the scene, the perspective shifts, with the characters switching positions, a signal to the audience that the tables have turned and that Regina likely now has the upper hand. She boldly confesses her dislike for Jonathan's sister with a shocking accusation: "I don't like women who try to take my husband from me!" Jonathan threatens to go to the authorities, at which point Regina casually severs his head with a handy meat cleaver. To finish the job, Regina dons heavy black gloves, and dissolves the fresh corpse with sulfuric acid, and another outside threat to an insular, twisted Milligan family has been thwarted.

Later, Markham the landlord (Martin Reymert) speaks with a nosy neighbor (Hazel Wolffs), who informs him that since that "weird" family

moved in, neighbors have had their chickens and rabbits gone missing, which suggests that one or more of the Orlofskis are stealing and eating them. As the neighbor confirms, "You can't trust them there foreigners!" Markham lets himself into the Orlofski's domicile, and stumbles onto Carrie and Orlando in the cellar. Markham is quite taken with the room full of living plants, and demands to see Mrs. Orlofski. Carrie and Orlando try desperately to stonewall the nosy landlord, but he will not be silenced, so Orlando has no choice but to wallop the intruder with a shovel. Upstairs, Regina rests on the bed, when she is awakened by a strange odor. Sniffing her way downstairs to the kitchen, she spots not one but two outside vermin threatening her domestic bliss- a cockroach, crawling across the kitchen counter, and a mouse, sitting near a trap on a cafeteria tray. Regina mercilessly hacks off the mouse's head and eats it, a truly bestial act made all the more disturbing as the killing of the mouse looks authentic, and makes the filmmaker appear as savage as his characters.

Orlofski manages to persuade the lovely young Prudence to foolishly join him in a nearby cemetery, where he desires to pay his respects to his father's grave. He reveals that his father's one great aim was to see him become a great doctor, and perhaps cure him of his disease of inheritance - as in The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! and The Body Beneath, the children of authoritarian parents are trained or groomed in some way to affect a cure for their parents' hereditary defects. Prudence then confesses her boss' misuse of the funds from the Orlofski estate, and decides then and there that she must forge a break with her corrupt employer. Prudence states, "I can't go on looking the other way," and thus begins her feminist break from service to a malevolent patriarchy. Orlofski is taken with Prudence's candor and courage, to him reinforcements of her physical beauty. As Prudence turns away from Orlofski's seductive gaze, he raises his hand in a gesture which may be an attempt to hypnotize her. Orlofski rudely wishes out loud that he had met Prudence before marrying Regina, showing himself to be a true heel - and a fairly accurate reflection of how Milligan saw the predatory heterosexual male, and his power over emotionally vulnerable women. Orlofski attempts to save face by blaming his choice of bed partner on family precedent: "Both my wife and I have been married strictly as a duty to our fathers!," underscoring the importance of heterosexual bondage

to a patriarchal culture, for without sanctioned partnerships and their diabolical offspring, the continuation of patriarchal omniscience is doomed.

Prudence confesses that she does have feelings for Orlofski, but insists that they must not enter this dangerous emotional minefield. Prudence is a modern, liberal, even protofeminist woman, yet she still champions old-world morals. Prudence is an example of what Victorian society was so badly trying to forge - a template for ethical behavior not based upon the crutch of discredited religious dogma. This modernist archetype thus demonstrates that the intrinsically moral person knows basic concepts of right and wrong almost as instinct, and does not need any outside force to arbitrarily dictate these rules. Prudence' name is in itself a clue to her character: "Prudence Towers" = good judgment triumphs. Yet the sneaky, Sadean Orlofski does manage to steal a kiss from Prudence, as the predatory male will always try to get his "piece," to hell with the consequences. A decrepit old hag bursts through the fog to confront the two-she is "Petra, Keeper of Graves." Petra (Eve Crosby) is a wonderful grotesque - half witch-woman and half bag lady - and one of Milligan's best, the second abstract character in Blood. Petra immediately recognizes Orlofski as the son of the deceased Talbot, and reminds him that tonight is a full moon, another in a string of cliche horror references in Blood. Petra insists that Orlofski leave, keeping Prudence with her, in effect acting as moral chaperon of the poor young woman, who seems increasingly unable to resist her suitor's malefic charms.

Orlofski rushes home and bursts into the cellar, now transformed into a dime-store werewolf, attacking Carlotta. Carrie injects her boss with anti-werewolf serum, in a straightforward horror scene enhanced by a good use of stage fog. Soon, Orlofski is lying on the operating table, and amusingly mutters, "We forgot to check the calendar!" Apparently, even the modern werewolf must abide by vapid middle-class conventions such as noting important dates on their day planner. The discussion turns to the plants, which are causing some concern: "The plants are growing too fast -the climate here seems to agree with them." Mortavia-as-America is painted here as a land where noxious, evil children may flourish, a most conspicuous anti-family sentiment on the part of the childless Milligan. Carrie very

theatrically pulls back a curtain to show Orlofski what remains of the nosy landlord Markham - he is suspended, Christlike, over the carnivorous plants, which are eating him alive, in a nice Grand Guignol touch. Orlofski notes in horror: "We must destroy them, before they destroy us!," another non-too-veiled comment regarding parents' belated regret in birthing and nurturing monster-children. Finally, Orlofski examines Carries's leg, and the audience finally gets to see physical evidence of the erosion of Victorian morality -a hideous mess of malformed sores, oozing poison.

Later that evening, the lawyer Root visits Prudence, and demands to know what, if anything, she has confessed to his client. Prudence, having already decided to end her employment to this purveyor of sanctioned larceny, takes the opportunity to officially resign, further forging her independence from the noxious male-dominated culture she was born into. Root departs, and is attacked and killed by Orlofski-as-werewolf (in a scene shot so darkly as to be almost unintelligible.) The next morning, "Keeper of Graves" Petra visits the Orlofski household to converse with Regina. Petra is painted as very "Jewish" here, similar to the pawn shop keepers in Bloodthirsty Butchers and Fleshpot on 42nd Street, muttering dialect-centric platitudes such as "I wouldn't want anyone should hear!" Petra reveals that she was the senior Talbot's mistress for fifteen years, thus tying this demented hag in with the Orlofski family (for in the Milligan universe, seemingly everyone is part of one big, unhappy family). Petra then exposes Orlofski's dalliance with the lovely Prudence. Regina is shocked, and Petra confirms, "The vife is always the last to know...." Petra reveals her real reason for her visit - extortion - promising to maintain silence over the Orlofskis' numerous skeletons for a price. Regina offers Petra jewelry as payment, and escorts the naive con-woman up the stairs, certainly to her demise. In Regina's bed chambers, Petra bends down to look inside the treasure chest, gazing into a mirror on the lid. She notices that Regina casts no reflection, realizing too late that the mistress of the house is a vampire. Regina confirms this revelation with a most awkward plot point -"You didn't know that my father was Count Dracula!"- and slams the lid down on Petra's hand, severing it.

Regina next visits Prudence in her bed chambers, and attacks her in her sleep, forever removing her threat to matriarchal omniscience. Regina returns to the Orlofski household to find everyone packed for travel. Orlofski states that they must flee Mortavia and return to Europe - their attempt at "modern living" has failed miserably. Regina is horrified to discover that Orlofski plans on leaving her beloved plants, her darling surrogate children behind, surely a sign that this twisted "family" wants her to expire. Carrie is instructed to set fire to the plants, as all good Milligan films end with a holocaust which consumes all sinners. Regina and Orlofski argue over this disastrous move, just another suburban couple fighting over the wisdom of a sudden relocation. As fire consumes the homestead, Regina and Orlofski become ever more violent towards each other, at one point each attempting to strangle the other, again illustrating Milligan's contention that in social relations, discussion quickly spirals down to argument, and ends in violence. Acrimony invariably invokes the bestial, and soon, it is the Halloween vampire and the dime-store werewolf who are fighting to the death, as the flames of moral bankruptcy consume them.

In a comical coda, another eccentric couple are shown the Orlofski house by another foppish landlord. The woman gushes on about how the cellar will be perfect for hubby's experiments, as might a middle-class Hausfrau about her partner's workshop, or a yuppie about a proposed wine cellar -for to Milligan, the bourgeois couple of modern America is indistinguishable from - and interchangeable with - a couple of "monsters" from old Europe. The new tenants sign the contract, and the landlord notes the signature with curiosity: "Baron von Frankenstein! Really?" The scene ends in freeze frame, a conspicuously arty moment for the usually utilitarian Milligan. This incisive epilogue underscores a common Milligan theme, that life in modern Suburbia is merely an endless parade of monster couples and their weed-like children. Dracula, Talbot, Frankenstein - in Milligan's America, all of these historic names of menace could be stenciled onto the sides of mailboxes alongside Jones, Smith and Bush, with no one batting an eye, for all families are the makers of monsters.

Blood boldly illustrates the inherent paradoxes of late Victorian society - most concisely with the ritual on-camera slaughter and consumption of a live

rodent - and plays very much like a nightmarish Dickens scenario brought to grisly, brutal life. The moral decay of the era seems a natural metaphor for Milligan's disdain of contemporary society for Blood- even more so than other films such as The Body Beneath- pontificates passionately on the subject. The collapse of morality depicted in Blood mirrors in microcosm the simultaneous collapse of the Victorian social order, a default of humanist faith which leads to a nightmarish reign of Social Darwinism, in which only the truly wicked and cunning survive, while all others are slaughtered unceremoniously.

Blood deftly (if awkwardly at times) illustrates one of the major conundrums of Victorian society, the often momentous contradiction between the public facade and the private reality. Behind closed doors, the well-mannered, well-appointed Orlofskis are gruesome, degenerate, warring monsters- as are most families behind closed doors. This phenomenon of duplicity leads directly into the heart of the Victorian dilemma - the function and parameters of an ethical society. Victorians agonized over their moral trespasses, tormenting themselves to the point of obsession, as witness Carrie's soulful prayer to Mary regarding her split loyalties. Yet the egotism and perverse promiscuity of the Orlofski clan, the patriarch foremost, certainly predicts the ascendancy of immorality as a counter-force.

The marriages of Orlofski and Regina, and to some degree Orlando and Carrie, also mirror certain Victorian conceits. As Milligan constantly maintained, a marriage is, like all human relationships, a political unit with power being wielded by the stronger individual over the weaker, either by force or mutual consent. Love is merely the public facade used to mask the often intense power dynamic going on within. The most successful marriages function not as two mutually-attuned individuals, but as one socio-political unit which, in Milligan's scenarios, have the decimation of the community and the maintenance of their own omniscience invariably as its common goal. Blood may be the most devastating critique of the heterosexual paradigm yet concocted by Milligan, which is really saying something, as he has been beating this drum since Vapors.

Sexuality is another topic, fraught with contradiction and moral ambiguity, with which Victorian society struggled. Bound by a legacy of religious indoctrination, the Victorians saw sex as a necessary evil, the engine by which to uphold one's lineage, primarily a utilitarian tool for the continuance of civilization. As a recreational act unto itself, sex was seen - at least in the public sphere - as dirty, repulsive and base. Beatrice Webb, a noted chronicler of Victorian culture, looked upon sexual passion as "an irresponsible, antisocial force to be exercised, at most, within the confines of marriage." (Interestingly) Webb also consciously rejected motherhood, an unusual stance for the typical woman of the day.') In league with this repressive notion of the sexual act was the constant specter of impotence. Still, as a powerful - one might say omnipotent - biological urge, sex had its sway over people, and became something of an obsession behind closed doors. Private Victorian society, as exemplified by bohemian artist enclaves such as "The Bloomsberries," indulged in all form of non-traditional sexual activity, including homosexuality, incest and rampant promiscuity.' Blood touches on all of these aspects of Victorian sexuality (all but) conspicuously in Milligan's case, homosexuality), from the Orlofski's loveless, sexless marriage, to the male Orlofski's dalliances with several women, to Carrie's sex-centric relationship with her brother - even Regina's "plant-children" can be seen as a nod to the utilitarian function of sex as creator of heirs.

Another dialectic contemplated in Blood also featured prominently in Victorian culture - the battle between science and religion, or more specifically, reason versus faith. The Victorian era saw an increasing onslaught of scientific and philosophic theories which challenged the old religious order, an attack which culminated in the proverbial "final nail in the coffin"- the release of Darwin's The Origin of Species, a momentous event which sparked the acrimonious battle between science and religion, a war which sadly still echoes throughout culture even today. The then-shocking revelation of Man as being merely another in a long line of randomly-evolving creations of a very logical, clearly non-magical natural process, was an direct assault on the spirit of Victorian Man, causing no end of soulsearching and angry denial. The Orlofskis, for one, have one collective foot in the old religious order, and the other firmly planted in the rigors of Science, to which they owe the continued life of their matriarch. Carrie's

pleas to a very real Virgin Mary underscore the Victorian dependence on the old religious paradigm during times of travail, and the Orlofski's debt to their monstrous parents (Werewolf and Vampire) also allude to allegiance to an antiquarian discipline of faith and magic. Yet the Orlofski experiment in "modern living" is predicated on the success of the various scientific research projects pursued in their alltoo-suburban cellar. The monster-children plants, poignant symbol of evolutionary theory, accent not only the obvious differences, but profound similarities between the apparently antithetical factions of science and religion - rather than further separating the two, they conspire to merge them in concordance, for it is these surrogate babies which, for a time, bring all the members of the household together in mutual activity, if not exactly harmony. Further, the plants may serve as an emblem of scientific naturalism, another potent new school of thought, which claimed that nature, as witnessed by man and revealed through the scientific method, was the prime reality, and that man could be entirely comprehended within its laws. All members of the Orlofski family are impacted - indeed, are defined- by the plants, which have such an ominous impact on the clan.

Like most of Milligan's families, the Orlofskis illustrate the principal of Social Darwinism, at least as interpreted by Herbert Spencer: "natural selection functions, or should function, the same way in society as in nature; that the struggle for existence is the precondition for the emergence of the socially fit as for the biologically fit; and that the best society is one that approximates a state of nature, that is least regulated, least governed, least controlled by extraneous forces of purposes."6 Although the Orlofskis are ultimately felled by their own inherited shortcomings, during their brief reign in Mortavia they successfully destroy all threats to their enclave, due to their moral vacuity and beast-like cunning (punctuated by acts like Regina's killing of the mouse). Yet as observers such as Julian Huxley noted: "the evolutionary or `cosmic process,' the process of struggle and selection which had made the world what it was, had resulted in the survival of the `fittest' but not of the `best.' The ethical process was precisely the opposite." Morality, to Huxley and others, was an essential - but not naturally occurring - part of Man's make-up, and must be forged through reason and mutual agreement for a society to function properly.'

It might be thus suggested that Milligan was, at heart, essentially a Huxleyian moralist, depicting in his nightmare fables the folly and devastation of Social Darwinism, which is how he viewed the various revolutions-sexual, social and political -which infected the 1960s and 1970s. During this time period, a moral "revolution" of sorts took place, wherein "moral deviancy was being popularized and democratized, so that it was not the occasional eccentric who was rejecting the traditional values, morals, and habits of thought and behavior, but an entire generation." Milligan's omnipresent late-Victorian milieu might thus have been concocted, in part, to act as a colorful metaphor for the moral collapse of the 1960s' "now" generation - which he saw as sharing a great affinity with the moral upheaval of the period he so often invoked in his films.' To Milligan, the license of the times was merely an excuse for the most cunning and amoral characters to lord over those more vulnerable, creating a devastating moral and emotional vacuum which could lead only to abuse, misery and disaster. To some degree, the Milligan dilemma is the Victorian dilemma. The primitive assurances of the past have been abandoned or destroyed. Religion is false at best, evil at worst. Modern man, now lacking any supernatural master or spiritual guideposts, must nonetheless find within himself some measure of morality, mercy, kindness, democracy, for without these, he is truly a "beast by nature," a low, lusting vermin whose only goals are satiation of base appetites and protection of one's immediate brood - and the world be damned.

Blood is one of Milligan's most polished and narratively mature works, filmed in crisp 35mm with a consistent and conscious color palette, using his claustrophobic interiors with great efficacy. After the derivative, redundant nature of Fleshpot on 42nd Street, which seemed to signal the end of an era, Milligan takes a quantum leap as an artist with Blood, yanking the weary Gothic horror genre to new heights, as he had previously done with The Body Beneath. Blood is Milligan's stab at a horror-satire (something he tried and failed with Fleshpot), his own experiment in stylish, ironic art-horror, indeed his answer to Andy Warhol and Paul Morrissey's Flesh for Frankenstein, released the year before. However, Milligan's penchant for soap opera dramatics, and his haphazard insertion of classic horror stereotypes insures that Blood will not look anything like the relatively big-

budget, philosophically advanced Warhol/Morrissey horror satires. Blood is unquestionably a Milligan film, bearing many of his trademarks and faults, but is still one of his crowning achievements. Blood is also an excellent example of Milligan using costuming to enhance character. All the characters in Blood can be effectively seen as symbol, and as such, their covering is significant. The clothing, make-up and other external factors (i.e.) their superficial gender and class "signifiers") reveal a great deal about their personality, agenda and impact on the community.

Blood's suspiciously bland title suggests several interpretations, but two predominate. Firstly, there is the use of "blood" as a modern slang reference to "family" or "blood relations," the central focus of this film certainly, and perhaps all of Milligan's films. Also, actual human blood, of an increasingly pure, even "royal" nature (i.e., "blueblood") is extracted from poor Carlotta in order to feed the monster plants, which in turn keep matriarch Regina alive well past her useful prime, and thus by inference to perpetuate the sorry Orlofski family into the doomed future. As this family of literal/ metaphorical monsters is indeed a diabolic one, causing harm to themselves and even more to the community, this "sacred" blood is nothing more than a fuel for animating monsters, as Milligan makes the startling case that blood, in and of itself, is evil, for it alone perpetuates human life, itself an evil thing. The title card for Blood is superimposed over Milligan's trademark bouquet of "blood red" roses, further underscoring the word with high symbolic import. Other Milligan films- starting with Seeds of Sin and continuing through The Body Beneath and The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!- dote on the notion of rare, sacred fluids used to keep alive a malevolent lineage, and Blood continues this tradition, succinctly connecting the dots between the seeds of inheritance and the perpetuation of human monsters into eternity.

Blood is filmed entirely on location at Milligan's then-current Staten Island residence. The familiar stone stairway entrance, put to such good use in The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! and Fleshpot on 42nd Street, makes another momentous appearance in Blood, appearing in the very first frame of the film. Milligan shot many of his movies on his own properties, usually using his current residence as a set, making his movies in

a very special and literal way, his actual "home movies" (or as some would have it, "home movies from bedlam"). Yet rather than filming his friends and family mugging during holiday or frolicking during tiresome vacation days, he tossed them scripts and costumes and had them perform high drama in familiar environs, a brilliant conceit which makes the best of Milligan's films seem all too real, virtually documentary in nature. The real estate which Milligan managed to acquire with his meager earnings were no mere vanity or investment gamble - they were essential to his art, as they almost consistently functioned as his studio, and were thus a basal reflection of the artist himself.

In Blood, Milligan takes his usual amount of pseudonymous credits (lighting, sound) sets, costumes, editor), as well as " Written & Directed by." A "Photographed by" credit is conspicuously absent, strange in that Blood is one of Milligan's most consciously arty films, with some of his cleanest cinematography and some of his most astute compositions. Blood was financed for $20,000 by one Walter Kent, with whom Milligan also made Dragula, purportedly a gay take of the Dracula legend, and now lost.' Blood was released to theaters only briefly, on the bottom of a double bill with Gerard Damiano's Legacy of Satan, and distributed by Bryanston Pictures, the notorious outfit helmed by Lou and Tony Peraino, the mob-connected entrepreneurs who used the business as a front to launder money coming in from their hardcore cash cow, Deep Throat.10 Another Faustian deal with another unscrupulous distributor virtually ensured Blood's obscurity, and suggests that Milligan received little if any promised box office receipts. Blood does not seem to have been released to television, and only an obscure UK home video release has prevented it from total obscurity. The existing home video version runs just under an hour, and all of the drama and narrative complexity which Milligan was able to insert into such a short running time is indeed impressive. Rumors abound of a 74-minute cut of Blood, featuring an entire subplot with Mortavia being invaded by rabid vampire bats, but no such references exist in the hour-long extant print, and no verification of this longer version has been forthcoming.

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Legacy of Blood (1978)

It is intriguing, to say the least, to note that Andy Milligan's 1968 verite Gothic horror outing, The Ghastly Ones, inspired not one but two remakes, both of which bear the title Legacy of Blood. The first, a 1971 film directed by Carl Monson (whose main work was in the sexploitation field), boasts so many parallels to Milligan's 1968 film as to border on plagiarism. In addition to taking the generic "Old Dark House" plot line of heirs to an estate gathering for the reading of the will, and being forced to spend the night in a house with an unseen killer, Monson's film adds many specifically "Milliganesque" touches: a nasty, dysfunctional family, constantly bickering; a real house used as a location for interiors and exteriors; a duplicitous attorney; allusions to perverse sexual activity; the revelation of incest between brother and sister; sado-masochistic rituals; conniving domestic help with romantic/sexual connections to the deceased; a mentally unstable servant; conspicuous use of flower imagery. The lunatic servant is even called Igor, as was Guru's sidekick in Milligan's Guru, the Mad Monk (1970). Monson was assuredly aware of The Ghastly Ones when he made his rather tired, pedestrian retread. In fact, one might call Monson's Legacy of Blood a made-for-TV "Movie of the Week" remake of Milligan's film. Most conspicuously, Monson eschewed Milligan's exciting verite camerawork for bland, anchored shot compositions, and he also forswore the natural qualities of Milligan's thespians for some truly dire method acting by a decidedly overachieving cast. In fact, the only performer in the Monson film who is not excruciating to watch is Faith Domergue, whose natural talents defy any attempt on the part of the director to diminish her character with obnoxious affectations. Yet the fatal flaw in Monson's film is that it vacillates awkwardly between horror and comedy, and this unwise attempt to balance two difficult genres- a common trap which lures many filmmakers and sabotages many films-causes the film to flounder badly and finally

collapse under its own weight. Still, it is of some interest to note that The Ghastly Ones was notable enough to others in the industry to generate such a bold, if failed, forgery.

It is also likely that Milligan was aware of Monson's film when he endeavored, sometime in the mid-1970s, to remake The Ghastly Ones himself-and to give it the same name as the Monson ripoff. Perhaps this was Milligan's way of "retrieving" his stolen property, to make the counterfeit in some way his own. Regardless of intent, the result is worthy on several levels, and one of Milligan's more unique productions. Milligan's Legacy of Blood (henceforth referred to as Legacy) shows Milligan in the bloom of artistic maturity, with an attention to detail and nuance missing from his slapdash, haphazard verite days. Thus Legacy, although boasting virtually the same screenplay as The Ghastly Ones, comes across as a completely different creature, due to the more polished camerawork and attention to performance.

Theatrical poster for Andy Milligan's Legacy of Blood (1978), a remake of The Ghastly Ones (1968).

The main character templates of The Ghastly Ones are lifted almost intact for Legacy. There are the three sisters upon which the plot revolves. The oldest, and most mercenary one, Jennifer (Louise Gallanda) reprises the role of Victoria; the winsome, even-tempered middle child Louise (Jeannie Cusick), stands in for Elizabeth; the superstitious, possibly psychic little

sister, Regina (Dale Hansen) takes over for The Ghastly One's Veronica. Milligan again picked some competent and comely local theater actresses to assay these roles. The sisters' mates (played by Joe Downing, Peter Barcia and Stanley Schwartz) are effective as the dull ciphers which all Milligan males must be. The Ghastly Ones' mysterious servant couple, Martha and Hattie, are in Legacy transformed into remarkably similar characters, Margaret (Elaine Boies) and Mary (Marilee Troncone) - as in the previous film, Margaret and Mary are sisters. And finally, the immortal Colin Trask is transformed into Carl, a most charismatic imbecile as played by Chris Broderick.

Many plot points, scenes and dialogue exchanges in Legacy are virtually identical to those in The Ghastly Ones. The reading of the will, complete with the revelations about Hanley's obscure business dealings in South America, is transplanted almost verbatim. Kid sister Regina has a disturbing premonition about the upcoming trip. When the sisters meet up in New York, they dine at a tearoom, sharing their vague memories of their distant father. As did Colin Trask before him, Carl abuses and kills a rabbit, and the rabbit later ends up in the youngest sister's bed, along with the cryptic note, "The meek shall inherit." Carl later hides in the cellar, and the Lennox sisters feed him like a dog; Carl then abuses his teddy bear as he has been abused. A red "X" drawn in blood appears on the door of two lusting sinners. The head of one of the murdered males winds up on the dinner platter. Some scenes are so similar as to evoke a sense of deja vu. Yet even some of these replicated scenes seem vastly different from their prototypes in The Ghastly Ones, the main difference being that they are all portrayed in a milder, gentler fashion. This may be mere laziness on Milligan's part, or a certain maturing or softening of the filmmaker's youthful, angry energy. Indeed, everything in Legacy seems milder - even the obligatory bickering is far less intense, and there is a conspicuous absence of on-screen gore. Legacy is filmed in a largely pedestrian way, using static shot compositions and fairly even-handed lighting, making the film look almost, at times, like a made-for-television version of The Ghastly Ones.

Within the somewhat pedestrian filming of Legacy, there are a few points of note. Firstly, Legacy is filmed inside a real house, beautifully-appointed in

Victorian furnishing. According to Tim Lucas, Legacy was shot at "a small hotel on Staten Island owned by Milligan.'" Jimmy McDonough verifies that Milligan purchased a property at around this time, the Tottenville Hotel at 44 Main Street, which he proceeded to turn into "a twenty-dollara-week flophouse for reclusive drifters and old alcoholics.'" If this is indeed the location for Legacy, it makes the hotel, and the film, both of some historical import; regardless, the setting lends a lush air to the proceedings, as did the location shooting in Milligan's British productions.'

Also, Legacy boasts three quick shots- so brief as to be almost subliminal - to convey a peripheral plot point, a most interesting aesthetic quirk also used to good effect in Guru, the Mad Monk. In each, these shots feature a character announcing someone's arrival, and may recall similar quick entrances of a incidental character in theatrical stage productions, whose only function is to announce the entrance of a new character. As well, Legacy boasts several scenes which greatly expand the usually insular, claustrophobic Milligan universe. The first occurs early on, when Margaret and Mary take Carl with them into town, to extract funds from the local Chase Manhattan Bank. Filmed outside the actual bank building, the scene involves Carl being accosted and harassed by two thugs, who force him to drink alcohol and then leave him for dead near the elevated train platform. Milligan even takes the time here to feature a small boy rolling a wagon wheel across the street, in order to quickly sketch a late 19th-century milieu. Later, when the three sisters and their spouses assemble in preparation to journeying to Hanley Island, they meet at the Tottenville train station, and the arrival of their train is cleverly sketched by a well-timed blast of stage fog. Well utilizing real Staten Island locations, these little sketches indicate atypical care on the part of the usually frugal Milligan, and add immensely to the mise en scene of Legacy, making it appear a much "bigger" film than it actually is.

Yet by far the most amazing scene in Legacy, and new to that film, occurs when the 3 sisters, after leaving the tearoom, visit Regina's friend, an Indian mystic named Baba Mufatanta (Bob Elia). Here is the abstract character we have been hoping for in Legacy, and quite a character it is. The extraordinary guru, who does seem to have uncanny powers of intuition-"Baba does not

guess; Baba knows!"-easily gleans important information about all three women. Baba explains that he took his first name, Baba (slang for "old woman" in the Slavic languages) from his mother, accenting his adherence to the feminine principle, and his last name from his father, of different extraction. He is of mixed blood, or as he proudly refers to himself, "a bastard!" Baba is alternately one of Milligan's most cynical portraits of those who purport to heal but merely extract cash from the gullible, but the fact that the mystic is able to intuit occult information about his guests muddies the critique somewhat. If we take his revelations at their word, Baba is, in fact, a supernatural character, one of a very few in the Milligan universe.

Nonetheless, there are some touches in Legacy which evoke the familiar Milligan universe. The opening credits feature the familiar crow caws which have graced many a Milligan production. The ancient Thomas J. Valentino library music cues convey an eerily familiar verisimilitude. And there is the fiery finale - almost as awkwardly mounted and haphazard as that in The Ghastly Ones- which symbolizes the descent into the inferno of all vile sinners.

There are a few minor characters in Legacy worth noting. There is a wonderful, if brief scene with Carla Wentworth as Sylvia, a washed-up alcoholic actress who rambles on endlessly about her glory days with Barrymore until she collapses in a drunken stupor. The caretaker of the local cemetery (Jack Boies) is a hilarious cardboard grotesque, a roughand-tumble sailor type with an eyepatch. A brief scene with the Hanley's shyster lawyer, Schaeffer (Martin Reymert), is a viable, if truncated redux of the far better scene in Blood, in which John Wallowitch hammed up the role in true Dickensian fashion.

There are, also, some faint echoes of cherished Milligan themes in Legacy, although these too are somewhat distilled by the rather meek nature of the film. Man's general duplicity is starkly conveyed via a mailman who, upon delivering a special delivery letter, takes the opportunity to snatch something from the owner's lobby. The postal clerk seems all too willing to take something - anything - in exchange for what he feels is an unrewarded service to his community, and as such well portrays the neurotic, passive-

aggressive middleclass American worker. (The sketch is made all the more significant by the fact that the mailman is played by none other than Milligan himself.) As in The Ghastly Ones, the killing of the three males annihilates patriarchy, negating the possibility of biological legacy via new children, for Milligan seems to desire the barren to inherit the earth. This overarching Milligan theme is awkwardly juxtaposed against the appearance of two actual children, a rare thing in a Milligan film - and a hint that the human race has not, yet, been successfully truncated. Yet one of the other, childless women concludes, "We're too selfish to have children!," a nod to the narcissism, if not the fecundity, of the average heterosexual couple as Milligan drew them.

The always-problematic subject of homosexuality in a Milligan film is addressed rather obliquely in Legacy, when it is referenced that the patriarch Hanley was buried in a "seaman's cemetery," according to the caretaker so he could be with his "fellow travelers." These are two conspicuously odd references, which could easily be seen as code for gay proclivity, implying that the patriarch shied away from his homestead not merely due to business responsibilities, but exotic sexual longings which could not be satisfied at home. Further, after he died, his body was shipped stateside "packed in orchids," that is, surrounded by emblems of an unabashed effeminate personality.

Yet by far the most prominent motif in Legacy- addressed even more overtly than in The Ghastly Ones- is the theme of female solidarity, which increasingly seems an important trope for Milligan. A touching scene on the beach features Margaret and Mary, the longsuffering servants of the Hanley estate, relaxing after the day's chores, staring out to the sea and absorbing the bountiful energy emanating from that omniscient female element. Discussing their current travails, and fretting over the ominous future, Mary turns to Margaret lovingly and states, "At least we have each other." Margaret replies, "We'll always have each other." The two women then embrace, two lonely sisters dedicated to the other, emotionally and perhaps sexually connected, gaining the strength to carry on from the female touch. Later, biological sisters Louise and Jennifer sit in front of a roaring fire - always a symbol of import in a Milligan film - and become reacquainted

after years of estrangement. As they bond more intimately, they turn and stare at the fire, finally taking each other's hand, which prompts Jennifer to coo, "Oh, the fire's so nice, isn't it?"-that fire being the healing warmth of female fellowship and/or sexual longing. There is also a fairly amazing scene between Louise and her child, Charlotte, wherein the mother chastises the youngster for being dismissive to their maid. Louise tries to impart to the young girl the importance of being empathetic towards others, to be aware of, and respectful of, their feelings-lest one grow up to be a "not very nice person." This is a most unusual bit of preaching on the part of Milligan - who heretofore seemed to revel in the moral turpitude of man - and showcases yet another situation in which one female attempts to impart wisdom to another, most specifically in the admonition to be kind to other women.

Milligan secured most, if not all, of the performers in Legacy from the ensemble he was engaging at time for his current theatrical endeavor, the Tottenville Summer Players, a group which performed several plays in the mid-1970s. Tottenville is an isolated section of Staten Island, and Milligan set up his "Players" first at the Guthrie Memorial Scout Shack at 42 Brighton Street, and later at a local church. An extant review for Milligan's production of George Bernard Shaw's You Never Can Tell in August of 1974 lists Legacy cast members Jeannie Cusick, Joe Downing and Martin Reymart as players.' The review also quotes Milligan as calling the production "a woman's lib comedy written in the 19th century," a comment which may underscore his interest in feminist issues, and the emphasis on female solidarity in Legacy.

Little is known about the distribution history of Legacy, other than the fact that it was also released under the title Legacy of Horror and produced by one Ken Lane. According to Jimmy McDonough, Legacy endured a brief Times Square theatrical runs; its first appearance to most film buffs was due to two home video releases in the early 1980s. It is safe to say that Legacy is not a Milligan fan favorite; Tim Lucas called it "dry, bloodless, anachronistic,"6 and Walter Gay labeled it "surprisingly bloodless, humorless, and totally lackluster."' While Legacy is neither humorless nor lackluster, the other criticisms have substance. Legacy is far milder than all

previous Milligan endeavors- even sedate - and the absence of the wild camera-work, violent squabbling, and gleeful Grand Guignol gore of earlier productions is certainly discernible. Legacy's main charms are its performances, most of which are admirable, and its abundant visual appeal, and it may come closer to what Milligan wanted to achieve in live theater than anything he had done previously.

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Carnage (1983)

With the advent of affordable consumer-grade video tape recorders in the early 1980s, demand for product surged. In the always-lucrative horror/thriller genre, interest was especially keen, both for sell-through feature titles and films which could be rented out at the local video store. Some of the earliest horror thrillers created specifically for the home video marketplace were Blood Beat (1982, d: Fabrice A. Zaphiratos), Sledgehammer (1983, d: David A. Prior), Blood Cult (1985, d: Christopher Lewis), Twisted Illusions (1985, d: Tim Ritter) and Revenge (1985, d: Tim Ritter). Another production, Boarding House (1983, d: John Wintergate) was filmed on video tape and marketed to home video, but also had the distinction of being released to theaters. Concurrently, popular theatrical releases such as The Amityville Horror (1979, d: Stuart Rosenberg) and Poltergeist (1982, d: Tobe Hooper) depicted the demonic invasion of the sacred American homestead. It was the intersection of these events which prompted producer Lewis Mishkin, son of long-time sexploitation king William Mishkin, to solicit Andy Milligan to shoot a feature specifically for the home video marketplace, with the participation of British producer Michael Lee. The original production, entitled Hell House, was shot in the summer of 1983, in 35mm, at a budget of $32,500.' The film was subsequently retitled Carnage and released to home video in 1986, putting it at the tail end of the first wave of made-for-video thrillers.

Carnage is artless and shoddy - even for a Milligan film - and much of the photography borders on the amateur. Further, Milligan's always-sloppy sound work reaches an all-time low here, rendering much of the dialogue indecipherable. The film is not dialoguecentric like most Milligan endeavors, and the 92-minute running time becomes quite tedious, padded with an abundance of extraneous filler material. This is unfortunate, because the screenplay for Carnage has many points to recommend it, and the overall

production seems to carry on an important theme for Milligan, one expressed profoundly in The Ghastly Ones and Bloodthirsty Butchers- the ritual destruction of the heterosexual paradigm -for in Carnage, the myth of heterosexual happiness is dissected once again.

As the film opens, a pair of newlyweds (Deeann Veeder and Chris Georges) stand at a candle-lit altar, adorned with pink roses. The seminal Wedding March from Wagner's opera, Lohengrin plays on an ancient phonograph, as the groom grabs a pistol and shoots his bride, and then himself. This teaser bluntly states the tragedy that is heterosexual adventure, the suicide that is marriage, the utter doom which awaits those foolish enough to enter this haunted forest of shattered dreams. Three years later, another pair of newlyweds, Carol Henderson (Leslie Den Dooven) and her husband Jonathan (Michael Chiodo) sign a contract giving them possession of their new house which, thanks to matching exterior shots, the audience knows as the location of the murder-suicide. A contract, as always, is a bad omen in the Milligan universe, ensuring that there will be a painful Masochistic edge to ensuing events. Confirming that marriage is an obsolete ritual tinged with ancient superstition, Carol and Jonathan walk into the house before Jonathan realizes that it is bad luck not to carry one's spouse over the threshold. The pair dutifully enact the silly gesture, a worthless act certainly, for they have already invoked bad luck by their absent-mindedness, but more importantly have shown their slavish adherence to futile social custom.

Soon, Carol drops and breaks a framed portrait of the house's previous inhabitantsthe self-slain couple -thus triggering an ominous, if obvious, omen of calamity. Underscoring the essential "spirit" of the place, Jonathan next plays a somewhat cruel joke on his mate, pretending to be a ghost and scaring his young wife half to death. Draped in a sheet like a cartoon phantasm, Jonathan thus embodies the haunted spirit of marriage, as a farcical, even comical foreshadowing or their impending mortality. As Carol and Jonathan become acclimated to their new surroundings, the house seems to take on a life of its own. Coffee cups move themselves, phonograph records start playing spontaneously, the phone rings without a sponsor, a bubble bath regurgitates. Hedge trimmers, candelabras and note pads move

of their own accord. Even more curious are the sounds these items make when they are animate - a strange sort of gurgling or whining (probably Milligan himself) which may be meant to convey the creaking of rusty joints, or something more obscure. The effect, however, is that the house, and these objects, are crying, suffering audibly for their occult torment.

Original poster art for Andy Milligan's Carnage (1982), his first film produced specifically for the home video market.

It is eventually revealed that Carol & Jonathan are inviting their friends and relatives over for a housewarming, and suddenly Carnage boasts an ever-familiar Milligan template -peers converging for a reunion with dire consequences for all. Carnage will follow this template to conclusion, sharing many similarities to Seeds of Sin and The Ghastly Ones. Carol hires a housekeeper, Rose Novak (Lola Ross), who is immediately assaulted in the basement by the ghost of the murdered bride. Sent home in a comatose state, Rose seems compelled to slit her throat with a straight razor, in one of the goriest scenes in the film. Later, two burglars (William Cooner and David Marks) break into the basement, and are summarily killed by a knife and a pitchfork. One of the thugs has his intestines levitated out of his body in a fairly effective scene, as the specter of the blood-spattered bride appears and disappears.

The gathering of peers proceeds as planned, and during a celebratory feast, an announcement is made by one participant, Anne (Chris Baker) of her pregnancy- a most ominous sign in a Milligan film - signaling that new spawn is scheduled to perpetuate man's evil. This seems to enrage the spirits to full fury, as the house becomes virtually alive with telekinetic happenstance. Things burst into spontaneous flames. Walter (John Garitt), the father of the devil spawn, is electrocuted in the bathtub by a radio which falls into the water (while playing polkas) in a scene quite similar to one in Seeds of Sin. Jonathan's secretary (Susan Ortiz) is subsequently beheaded by a long-handled axe.

Carnage leaves the house momentarily for an intensely sad funeral for Walter, which clearly also functions as a eulogy for the heterosexual experiment, which is being dismembered with alacrity by the spirits of the place. These spirits are soon revealed to be Mark and Susan Webb; it is Susan's specter which appears before hapless victims preceding their demise. It turns out that the reason for the Webbs' self-annihilation is two-fold: Susan lost a baby to miscarriage, and later discovered that she had breast cancer. This one-two punch to the continuation of the human race via procreation

was surely a death knell to the luckless couple, and further underscores the dire fate of the heterosexual project in the Milligan universe. Following the grisly deaths of their friends and colleagues, the Hendersons eventually enlist the aid of a priest (Jack Poggi) to investigate the possibility of demonic possession. The doddering clergy takes one look at the place and advises the couple to sell it post-haste, a suggestion which angers the ghost of Susan Webb, who kills the priest with a cleaver to the head.

The Hendersons finally admit defeat - the heterosexual experiment has failed - and plan to flee the "hell house" for a more tranquil urban environment. As she packs her things, Carol finally encounters the ghost of Susan Webb, and immediately senses that she is looking at her possible future fate. Carol apologizes for trampling on the Webbs' sacred domain, but Susan merely intones Carol to "Go!," to run like hell from the accursed heterosexual trap. Yet in a confusing plot twist, the Webbs somehow disable the Hendersons' escape, forcing them to relive and re-enact the ritual suicide of heterosexual failure. As the Lohengrin wedding march again plays mockingly in the background, the two murmur "I love you," those famous last words of romantic catastrophe, and Jonathan shoots his wife, and then himself in the head. Carnage ends on a comically ironic note - a "For Sale" sign is placed in front of the hell house, as the howl of the beast is heard in the background. Another failed couple will stumble onto this accursed dwelling, and another attempt at suburban bliss will go down in flames-ad infinitum.

Although they follow a tradition of doomed heterosexual couples which started with Seeds of Sin (and likely before), the Hendersons are not the vengeful, amoral Milligan couple of yore, but a kinder, gentler archetype - the Reagan-era Yuppie couple - well in keeping with the bland right-wing cultural zeitgeist of the 1980s. The Hendersons, in fact, almost come across as sympathetic characters, possibly a first in the cinema of Andy Milligan. If the Hendersons are as dysfunctional as their cinematic predecessors, they hide their flaws well. Peripheral characters, such as Walter and Anne, and Carol's father (Bill Grant) and his housekeeper Martha (Judith Mayes), are marginally cantankerous, but nothing like the old warring Milligan couple of the previous decade. With Carnage the filmmaker seems to be, if not

maturing then at least mellowing with age. Even the familiar Milligan proselytizing we have come to expect is softer, less spiteful. At one point, a daughter receives some advice from her mother: "All marriages do (have a rough time). Three years is one of the rough spots. After that it gets worse."

Yet the ultimate theme of Carnage follows that of The Ghastly Ones and Bloodthirsty Butchers, in their attempt to ritually dismember the notion of heterosexual synchronicity. It becomes clear early on in Carnage that the spirits of the house do not merely desire to scare off the new intruders-they want to mock, warn and attack the very notion of heterosexual bliss, known intimately by them to be a trap of unending horror and torment. The Webbs' horrific ending, which bluntly states that marriage is suicide, enables their freed, if cursed, spirits to thus educate future souls foolish enough to trod the same murky path. Carnage's coda, which implies another couple will soon inherit the joys and terrors of this "hell house," merely echoes a familiar Milligan motif, that all heterosexual couples are interchangeable, and each will act out the same angst-ridden psycho-drama of broken dreams, perpetually unless one generation finally unveils the heterosexual myth as the wretched curse which is, eschewing it permanently. At one point, a character states, "There's a devil in the house," that "devil" being the malevolent spirit of heterosexual doom. Tellingly, a lone dog barks throughout much of Carnage, a constant reminder of the role of the bestial which haunts all man's attempts at civilization. Even the Lohengrin wedding march, used twice to punctuate specifically dire circumstances, seems more a death dirge than a celebration of new life and hope.

For reasons not made entirely clear, the cellar seems to be the locus of much of the metaphysical energy in the house. The possession of Rose the housekeeper occurs there, and the destruction of the intruders is also engineered there. Earlier, a wild cataclysm occurs in the basement, seen by none but the audience, with objects flying every which way in a curious and oddly moving scene. What this suggests is the notion of this "hell house" representing the collective energy of the Hendersons, a motif not far off from the use of a dwelling as a metaphor for the human body, as in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, and stories such as "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Masque of the Red Death." This subterranean setting may thus stand

for the unruly, even violent subconscious mind, those forces within both individuals and communities which undermine all attempts at familial harmony, baring the snarling devil which lurks beneath the placid facade of domestic bliss. Likewise, the chamber where the Hendersons, and the Webbs before them, meet their gruesome ends, may be seen as the house/body's broken heart, a locale of pain and betrayed dreams. As well, the "hell house's" various tantrums, with objects become animate and mischievous, also suggest a figurative "body" in tumult.

Carnage is set in modern times- as witness the period automobiles parked on the street, and various shots of skyscrapers-yet the haunted "hell house" seems ensconced in a time warp, thrown back to Milligan's beloved late-Victorian milieu. For as always, the travails of the modern couple in a Milligan film is a retreat back to the genesis of the notion of "romantic love," begun during the Middle Ages and codified during the Victorian era. Were Carnage a tighter, more carefully filmed production, it might have ended up as one of Milligan's best, as it succinctly addresses several pet themes with some success. Sadly, due to the artless and lazy nature of the film, it is only fitfully entertaining, never quite coalescing into an engaging narrative experience - although Walter Gay thought Carnage "comparatively slick" and "arguably (Milligan's) best movie. "I Bill Landis of Sleazoid Express fame was fortunate enough to work with Milligan on the production of Carnage, and describes the filmmaker as being highly energized during the shoot: "a peppery munchkin zooming all over the place, supervising the crew, searching for the best camera angles, acting out scenes for the performers."3 In a final bit of irony, the hotel-cum-flop house which Milligan owned in Staten Island and where much of Carnage was filmed, burned down shortly after filming completed.'

Concurrently with increasingly sporadic filmmaking endeavors such as Carnage, Milligan tried his hand at running his own Off Broadway theater. Milligan purchased a rundown former speakeasy at 335 West 39th Street in Manhattan, a stone's throw away from the Port Authority Bus Terminal. The dilapidated building was "small and garage-like," according to Bill Landis.' Milligan financed the $50,000 purchase price by selling shares of stock to friends and colleagues. The theater, which Milligan dubbed The Troupe,

opened in October of 1977.6 Among the hundreds of plays put on at the Troupe in its troubled decade-long lifespan were World War Zero by Joseph Renard (and featuring Milligan as an army Sargent in Vietnam); The Nutty Nuptials of M. Barillon by Georges Feydeau; A Woman and Her Dog by Peter Schmideg; Chalk It Up by Daniel Haben Clark; Ghosts and A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen; also featured were original productions by Milligan such as The Bitch. As with his films, Milligan did most of the work at the Troupe, alienating colleagues and tiring himself out in the process.' Milligan himself admitted that running the theater was hard, thankless work: "The Troupe was like being in jail."' All in all, The Troupe was a critical and box office flop. In addition to the uneven nature of the productions themselves, the building was in terrible disrepair, and was located in a dreadful neighborhood. Due to the Troupe's relative failure, as well as the deterioration of the city due to the ravages of street drugs, Milligan finally decided to close up shop and leave New York sometime in 1986.9 According to Milligan, one event which helped make his decision was seeing a man defecate on the street in front of the theater.10 It is likely that another factor which influenced Milligan's sea change was his discovery that he had contracted the deadly HIV virus, a sad eventuality considering his reckless lifelong sexual lifestyle. In any event, Milligan abandoned the Troupe building, and his Staten Island properties, and soon fled with acquaintances to the naive promise of sunny California."

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Raffiné in La-La Land

When Andy Milligan arrived in California, something happened. Perhaps it was the warmer climate, the laid-back atmosphere, or the fact that he was dying of AIDS, but something softened in Milligan's heart, as witness his last films, which denote a radical shift in his misanthropic worldview. When first settled in Hollywood, Milligan tried his hand at another haute couture dress shop, which understandably failed in a community awash with such ventures, so he turned his sights again to filmmaking, his first love and passion (if not his curse).' Two films Milligan made in California-Monstrosity and The Weirdo-feature a sympathetic view of an outsider to the community, a theme which may have resonated on a personal level with the newly-transplanted New Yorker. In each film, a societal outcast becomes heroic, almost mythic in his struggle against adversity, in a direct turnabout from the self-loathing anti-heroics of Milligan's New York films. In addition, there is a desire for brotherhood markedly absent in the earlier films, or as Tim Lucas observed, "a common, almost nostalgic plea for decency and community."2 Something about Hollywood genuinely perked up Milligan, and a brief look at his last films may reveal what that "something" was.

Monstrosity

Monstrosity has a copyright notice of 1987, and is chronicled by Jimmy McDonough as Milligan's first California effort, although Tim Lucas, Bill Landis and Walter Gay all suggest that Weirdo: The Beginning was shot first.' Perhaps the confusion is due to the fact that Monstrosity was unable to get a release of any kind for many years, and even a relatively recent DVD release by Video Kart is out of print and remains obscure. This is a shame, because Monstrosity is an amazing, baffling and at times extraordinary film, equal parts social satire, slapstick farce and light fantasy, awash in the overall sheen of the horrorcomedy mythos. Although it is haphazard,

awkward and not entirely successful as narrative, it is- not unlike its main subject - an ultimately endearing assemblage of various random aesthetic and expositional components, all of which manage to coalesce at finale into an impressively cohesive experience. Monstrosity is Andy Milligan's "Frankenstein," a conceit stated overtly by one of the characters, and vividly illustrated via the film's main plot points. As such, it can be placed in a group with Bloodthirsty Butchers, The Man with Two Heads and Blood, all of which took as their main inspiration a famous horror character from literature (Sweeney Todd, Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde and Dracula, respectively). Yet Monstrosity borrows extensively from more oblique sources, from the Jewish folk tale of "The Golem" to Frank Capra's American fable It's a Wonderful Life (1946) and Death Wish (1974, d: Michael Winner).

Monstrosity starts off boldly proclaiming its origins-the first shot shows the famous "Hollywood" sign, and so identifies the scenario with that occult emblem of precarious fame and fortune. Three punks kill an old man and rape and kill a woman, suggesting that violence defines the real Hollywood, as violence defines the real world. The slain woman, Ronnie, was an artist, and her death symbolizes the systemic extermination of high culture in an ignorant, brutal world. Ronnie's lover Scott (Michael Lunsford) and his two pals (Joe Balogh, David Homb) vow revenge on Ronnie's killer, and thus form a justice-seeking counterpart to the trio who wantonly savage civilization. The gang of three killers and the gang of three revenge-seekers represent the two sides of the male collective, microcosmic stand-ins for Janus-faced patriarchal society.

Monstrosity next introduces the problematic notion of citizens compelled to take the law into their own hands, an understandable if doomed reaction in a corrupt, crime-ridden culture in which law enforcement is weak, ineffectual, or compromised by the very forces of evil they have been assigned to battle. This notion of vigilante justice was popular in culture at the time, as witness the popularity of the Charles Bronson "Death Wish" films as mentioned, and also thanks to real-life vigilantes like Bernard Goetz - mentioned in Monstrosity- whose retaliatory action against criminal assault was seen by many as a courageous reworking of the failed social contract. Yet as problematic as the specter of "citizen justice" is, the questions poised

are valid. How does society seek and maintain justice in an unjust world? How does the community maintain control over its destructive elements? This group's solution is to create their own "engine of destruction," to vanquish any designated "others" (a none-too-veiled reference to the Military-Industrial Complex). To frame this concept, Scott mentions the Jewish folk take of a "Golem," a giant fashioned from clay, created to "avenge the enemies of his followers." What Scott refers to is more specifically known as "The Golem of Prague," a 19th-century legend regarding a monstrous supernatural entity which rises from the earth to protect the Jewish people from their foes. The creation of this magical avenger of the persecuted is often attributed to Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezatel, an actual 16th-century rabbi and scholar who was himself attributed with possessing mystical powers by some disciples. The tale of "The Golem" has been popular in culture since its birth, the subject of several plays, novels, poems, operas and films.

Fantastically, the unlettered dudes somehow do manage to create this living Golem. Stitching various sundry body parts together, they fashion a patchwork mockery of the human male. Seeking a name for their creation, Scott references the creature's literary precedent: "We'll name him Frankie, after Mary Shelley's Frankenstein!" Frankie, of course, as an emblem of human creation, is an absurd, pathetic clown, with an orange fright wig, buck teeth, a melting eye, and a gorilla arm -that simian limb reminding the viewer that man is at least "part beast." In fact the whole operation can be seen as a marvelously crude metaphor for the human birth process, wherein two (or more) hapless buffoons working in malefic concert manage to manifest a living being from the ether, creating an unlucky fool who must suffer the torments of material existence as penance for their forbearer's foolhardy actions. Indeed, Frankie's creators are dimly aware of their sin, as one observes, "It's kind of a shame he has to come into a world full of deceit and corruption."

Strikingly, however, Frankie lies immobile and lifeless until a giant "Winnie the Pooh" stuffed teddy bear falls on top of him, almost in a mimicry of human coitus, at which point Frankie is imbued with magical life. The bear thus reinforces the notion of Frankie being an innocent, a

child's spirit trapped in a grotesque man-body. The magical act also suggests the power of a love object to ignite the heart, and animate the spirit. Soon, Scott is playing with his animate creation, which he surely sees as his "baby," as witness him playing "This Little Piggy" with Frankie's mutilated toes. The playful act reinforces the creature's role as surrogate child (and also intriguingly recalls a similar episode from Milligan's first film, Vapors, suggesting that Milligan was aware, at the end of his career, that he had indeed come full circle.)

However, being Milligan heterosexuals, the dudes have created Frankie not to be a loving, gentle creature, but a killing machine, acting as their surrogate in seeking justice for the murdered companion, and other victims of men's feckless cruelty. How they indoctrinate Frankie into his chosen career path is both absurd and revealing -they show him one-sheet theatrical posters of two of idiot maledom's most popular "poster boys"- Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger- two brain-dead, real-life action heroes who symbolize the brute ignorance of heterosexual male posturing. As the fools point at these living "action figures" they yell "Kill! Kill!" to Frankie, conveying a double message - do they want Frankie to kill like these two macho goons, or are they secretly wishing that Frankie's bold innocence might actually be powerful enough to slay these two noxious representatives of humanity? Yet the elemental metaphor is intact either way-creators of monsters, like parents of children, and teachers of generations, impart the importance of killing to their (especially male) charges, a consideration which apparently overrides concerns for love, empathy or compassion, seen as obsolete notions in a fallen culture.

Frankie soon has the good fortune to meet the love of his life, a punk burn-out named Jamie Lee. One of the strongest characters in Monstrosity, Jamie Lee (Carrie Anita) is a wildly caricatured female heroine both pathetic and lovable. A semi-retarded drug addict, Jamie Lee has just enough brain matter left to love an innocent, and to perceive Frankie as a very "special" specimen of the male animal. Her punk mannerisms battle with straight comedic impulses, creating a bizarre and lovable character which seems equally based on Courtney Love and Carol Burnett. Due to her naivete, bad habits and manic personality, Jamie Lee is an outsider like Frankie, and so is

immediately drawn to the sad-sack iconoclast. And in their woefully short time together, Milligan creates perhaps his most poetic heterosexual couple, tragic and doomed but entirely lovable.

Discovering that Frankie has never had sexual relations, being only several days "old," Jamie Lee has a devastating retort -"I didn't know there were any (virgins) in Hollywood!"- delightfully expressing Milligan's cynical viewpoint of the opportunistic, morally false occupants of Tinseltown. When Jamie Lee is finally able to ignite Frankie's' lust, the patchwork automaton gushes blood instead of semen - perhaps Milligan's most clever delineation yet of the intrinsic link between sex and violence. As a sign of her affection -and pathetic attempt to acclimate Frankie into "normal" society - Jamie Lee gives Frankie three portentous gifts: a "Kick Ass" T-shirt, a studded leather collar, and a headband with "Honda" printed on it. This feeble attempt to "brand" her lover, to turn him into just another mainstream consumer, is winningly illustrated by the "Honda" headband, a knowing nod to the tendency of fools to wear branded merchandise, unaware of their subsequent role as advertising shill -in effect, just another corporate-owned "product."

The eventual appearance of a guardian angel named "Angelo" (Joel Weiss) catapults Monstrosity into pure fantasy territory, and here is where the influence of Capra's It's a Wonderful Life can be seen. Like Clarence Odbody in Capra's film, Angelo tries to guide Frankie, his assigned earthling, through the trials he faces, but he is ultimately unable to rescue his charge from his fate. Angelo also becomes Milligan's final, and greatest, abstract character who, like predecessors Magda, Corky and Petra, impart a fantasy-tinged allegorical bent to the scenario, aiding the protagonist and providing crucial expositional information. In a later, most touching scene, Angelo "marries" Frankie to Jamie, the haphazard "ceremony" an alternately beautiful and savage rendering of this sacred social ritual, probably the most withering portrayal of the practice since Milligan's Torture Dungeon.

Meanwhile, Frankie's accruing happiness, even as he fells his "parents"` enemies, is seen as a threat to his three "fathers," who become increasingly like those they targeted for their "son" to destroy. For inexplicable reasons-

other than the fact that it must be a natural inclination of the male -Scott and his pals stockpile fearsome automatic weapons, as if they anticipate a gang war or social apocalypse which will soon require their use. Jamie Lee's subsequent, savage murder at the hands of Scott, via an injection of poisoned crystal meth, is about as mean an act as one could imagine, because Scott first lures the fragile drug user into going back "on the needle," something she had promised herself to forgo. Her punishment for moral transgression is thus aptly, if cruelly, assuring that her next fix will be her last. One cannot help feeling that Scott's murder of Jamie Lee is equal parts garden-variety misogyny and jealousy of sharing his surrogate child with anyone, and as Scott is indeed Frankie's "father," there is more than a touch of Oedipal conspiracy and patriarchal abuse of women in the assassination.

Jamie's horrible demise signals clearly to Frankie that human life is not borne of love, but of hate, and the world is a hell, not a heaven, so he finally turns on his "parents," the sole cause of his cursed existence, dispatching them with the same brutality they had so efficiently taught him. Following his erasure of those who were foolish enough to give him life, Frankie destroys his unhappy home via a fiery conflagration which, like all such immolations in the world of Andy Milligan, mirror the descent of sinners into the inferno, the inevitable result of all human activity.4

In a marvelous coda which confirms that Milligan intended Monstrosity primarily as an allegorical piece, Frankie rests on a public bench next to a bedraggled bag lady called Agnes (Helen Costa). The two pontificate their various harebrained philosophies of life, like any two deranged homeless nobodies on any street corner in any large city. Frankie confidently declares, however, that if one uses the brain one is "given," one can be anything one wants to be. Frankie thus articulates a belief that mind can be used as a bulwark against indulging the insatiable, low lusts of the body (for drugs) sex, violence, etc.), a power unused by most people, but theoretically possible for all. As the two chat on aimlessly, the camera pans up to the stars, at which point Milligan himself can be heard shouting, "Cut! That's a wrap!" The camera pans down again to the street, and now, magically, the entire cast and crew of Monstrosity has assembled around Frankie and Agnes, a most poignant invocation of the piteous "family of man" as

Milligan perceived it. This excitingly selfreflexive moment encapsulates all which has gone before, and verifies that even at the last, Milligan fancied himself a film artist, and no mere hack.

Although it is markedly different from anything Milligan created before, Monstrosity still hails many trademark Milligan themes and emblems, and comes across as a largely successful venture overall. Firstly, Monstrosity admirably captures the youthful zeitgeist of the 1980s California "punk" aesthetic, from the leather-centric wardrobe of many of the cast to the knowingly minimal industrial-tinged musical score. Alongside this notably "new" look, there are moments which revisit earlier Milligan motifs-the bouquet of roses in Ronnie's hospital room, the gory, gratuitous disembowelment of a victim, the intimate, claustrophobic air of forced social interaction. And the lessons of Monstrosity, although couched in lighthearted terms, are finally as grim as anything Milligan did previously. The male collective, which may start out with the best of intentions, intending to rid society of its enemies and bring forth their own version of justice, in the end becomes just as criminal as those they target. Through the increasing (and apparently intrinsic) tendency towards violence as an answer to all problems, the collective and their agents inevitably devolve into the same brutal, war-oriented mindset as their enemies, and are ultimately indistinguishable from same. The endemic infantilism which dominates male-male activity is succinctly illustrated in an early scene which shows two of the killer thugs crashing in their dilapidated living quarters. As one raptly watches a blank screen of snowy static on the television, an outlandish takeoff of the Warner Bros. "Looney Tunes" cartoon theme music is played in an endless loop, starkly capturing the superfluous, cretinous mindset of the typical male, whose interests are terminally immature, yet none the less dangerous for that. Under a malicious patriarchy, all innocents are victimized, usurped, abused and/or terminated. Likewise, the child's natural urge is to love, but society trains him to hate, as witness the ultimately successful transformation of Frankie from lover to killer. Even he, who as one character observes, consists of "nothing but goodness," is finally contaminated by the intrinsically malevolent nature of the human race.

In Frankie and Jamie, Milligan creates his most devastating (and bizarre) depiction of the dumb heterosexual couple yet. Longtime Milligan companion Hal Borske plays Frankie with just the right combination of comedic mannerisms and believable pathos, creating a memorable screen persona, half hero and half villain, wholly endearing and utterly compelling. In fact, Frankie also doubles as Milligan's ubiquitous "misfit" character - so often portrayed by sympathetic hunchbacks- dragged from the wings and placed squarely center stage as a main character. And as mentioned, Carrie Anita's portrayal of a drug-addled reject is nothing short of magnificent. However, in a radical shift from this archetype as seen in his New York and British films, Frankie and Jamie are entirely sympathetic, the victims of society and not its destroyers. As such, Monstrosity builds on a trend first seen in Milligan's last New York production, Carnage, and signals a momentous philosophical change in the maturing filmmaker. Although the main thrust of both films is the ultimately disastrous adventure of the heterosexual couple, the pair of unlucky fools are in each portrayed as less than monsters, more victim than instigator of their crimes, and in some wise quite sympathetic. In Monstrosity, Milligan runs with this and fashions something unique for him - a completely sympathetic couple who come across as heroic in their inevitably tragic journey towards unity. In fact, Monstrosity radically repaints the heterosexual couple as mythic tragedians, a complete reversal of Milligan's earlier thesis, that the heterosexual paradigm is the natural enemy of society. Milligan will take this notion even further in his next film, Weirdo: The Beginning.

Although no film adaptation of the novel to date borrows much of its telescopic narrative and peculiar framing devices, Monstrosity does- perhaps in spite of itself-reflect certain key aspects of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. One of Victor Frankenstein's stated motives for manifesting his unholy "creature" is to placate the human desire to attract playmates and companions both as allies, and a bulwark against loneliness. As in the novel, the artificial creature is articulate, even erudite, and Frankie, maturing and evolving throughout Monstrosity is, by film's end, a passable "street philosopher." At one point, Shelley's Frankenstein also attempts to create a female counterpart for his creature - at the creature's demand - and thus mirrors the fortuitous appearance of Jamie Lee in Monstrosity, whose ill-

fated tryst with Frankie reinforces the staid cultural notion of the heterosexual paradigm seeking eternal balance by finding mates for all loners. Yet as Frankenstein contemplates the possibility of his creature merging sexually with his newly-formed partner, he envisions a nightmare scenario, leading him to abort the female monster before completion: "One of the first results of those sympathies for which the demon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror.'" As Milligan considered all men beasts, and all women their congenital conspirators in propagation, the "race of devils propagated upon the earth" is nothing short of Man himself, his own worst enemy, in fact his own destroyer. Further reinforcing an endemic misanthropy, Shelley's Frankenstein, upon witnessing the worst in human behavior both in himself and the community, laments that "men appear to me as monsters thirsting for each other's blood," a tidy summation also of Milligan general philosophy.' Finally, Frankenstein's creature's profound hold over his architect, borne of guilt and fear, leads to a shifting of the pair's original power dynamic, as witness the monster's observance: "You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!'" Likewise Frankie, Scott's surrogate child, all too soon holds sway over his "father," who suffers torments of guilt and jealousy over his accursed creation; only the "father's" death at the hands of the "son" restores the original balance of power.

One of Andy Milligan's last films, Monstrosity (1987), is considered by many fans one of his greatest; here, Milligan buff Ian Sundahl offers his own artwork homage (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

The death of the artist Ronnie, which ignites the entire scenario, frames another strong theme in Monstrosity- the precarious nature, even immanent

death of, art and other forms of "high" culture in a world being drowned in ignorance, violence and moral abandon. Later in the film, there is a very touching posthumous art exhibit for the slain Ronnie, which also works as a wake for the future of art in America, a culture which has historically treated its artists like garbage - as Milligan for one intimately knew - and in fact has no problem exterminating them, in order to make room for more junkies, thugs and sports fans.

Monstrosity is also a decidedly harsh critique of modern drug culture. As a character notes, "We've lost half of California to drugs," as the prudish, tee-totaling Milligan never had any use for drugs, either for himself or anyone he worked with.' In Monstrosity, however, Milligan balances his disdain for those who succumb to the cheap rush of substance abuse with an avowed sympathy for those same weaklings- such as the aforementioned Jamie Lee - whose moral weakness proves tragic not only to herself, but to her loved one - and by extension, much of the community. Again, a profound sadness for those unable to detect the righteous path rides alongside the typical cynical Milligan view of losers as deserving their horrible fates.

The highly self-reflexive coda signals not only that Milligan seriously considered that Monstrosity might be his last film, but that he did fancy it something of a signature piece, and the astute combination of influences as diverse as Frankenstein, It's a Wonderful Life and Death Wish do suggest that Milligan wanted to go out with a bang. Unfortunately, Milligan had to again work with one of his least favorite producers, Lewis Mishkin, son of Milligan's own "guardian angel," William Mishkin. According to biographer McDonough, Mishkin Jr. and Milligan had the requisite shouting matches during the filming of Monstrosity, leading Milligan to confess to McDonough at one point, "I really don't enjoy filmmaking any more - I find it extremely hard work now."9 Surely, the aging and ailing filmmaker was winding down, but luckily for his fans, he had at least one other, sporadically brilliant project left up his sleeve.

Weirdo: The Beginning

Milligan's next California film, Weirdo: The Beginning, (henceforth referred to as Weirdo) expands upon one of the main themes of Monstrosity - the dumb heterosexual couple as a sympathetic social unit - and fashions a tragic love story worthy of the ancients. Further, Weirdo ruminates productively on the notion of the Outsider, and his fate as victim of a conspiratorial community. While still boasting a dark, even tragic message, Weirdo represents almost a complete "reverse angle" on previous Milligan films, in that the main characters are society's victims, not its assassins.

The "Weirdo" of the title is Donnie, a developmentally retarded youth. As portrayed by Steve Burington, Donnie comes across as a sweet, if dull, innocent, and as he guilelessly traipses through a wooded area, he seems a carefree ingenue immersed in a pastoral paradise, a strange image in a Milligan film. All too soon, however, the cruel reality of humankind rears its ugly head, in the form of three motorcycle thugs who confront and assault Donnie in an attack with has clearly sado-masochistic overtones. The thugs kick, beat and slap the poor Donnie, also forcing him to "play Doggie," an act of total submission which hearkens back to Mr. Blood's psychic violation of the whore April in The Man with Two Heads. With their bulging muscles, bare chests, and aggressive physical contact with their victim and each other, there is also a strong homoerotic element to the highly ritual molesting of the boy-like Donnie, and it is easy to imagine the attack devolving into homosexual gang rape. Yet the thematic message is clear even as the attack stands- the male collective (i.e., "the mob") targets, harasses and assaults an individual in society, whether it be a female, an effeminate male such as Donnie, or anyone considered an outsider to the ignorant brute dogma of "the group."

Donnie drags himself home to his caretaker, a "Miss Martins" (Naomi Sherwood). The overtly maternal Miss Martins is first seen as a surrogate mother to Donnie, as she seems to be his primary caretaker, filling in for a notably absent biological mother. Soon there enters a red herring of a character, a sexy young woman named Lisa, visiting from Colorado. Lisa seems to be introduced in order to sexually taunt and torment the highly repressed Donnie, but she disappears from the film before she has much of a chance to do so. Donnie does spy on the slutty woman as she takes a bubble

bath, barely able to contain his voluptuous voyeuristic thrill, but this subterfuge never leads to any consequences, and ends up being a narrative dead end. Lisa's presence in Weirdo does add some expositional points, such as the fact that Donnie's biological mother is an alcoholic, and threw him out of the house. Miss Martins also informs Lisa that Donnie's emotional state is precarious, which leads the young woman to ask if he is dangerous. Miss Martin retorts: "No, just different," underscoring Donnie's symbolic role as archetypal outsider.

Donnie later contemplates life near a bubbling brook, a pastoral setting reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. Suddenly, out of nowhere, like an apparition or a guardian angel appears his soul-mate, Jenny (Jessica Strauss), a handsome if homely girl with a leg brace, obviously a cripple and immediately positioned as a perfect match for the emotionally and sexually crippled Donnie. Donnie and Jenny are thus set up as two myth-infused "starcrossed lovers," along the lines of Romeo and Juliet and Adam and Eve. Jenny is full of optimistic affirmations-"Just being with someone is giving."- and Donnie is immediately infatuated. When Jenny soon has to leave, disappearing almost as suddenly as she appeared, she leaves her shawl behind, which Donnie retains as a keepsake, taking it back to his hovel and obsessing on it, a chimera from a vision still perceived as unreal. Clutching the sacred fabric suggests to Donnie the unlimited possibilities of expanded social activity.

Donnie and jenny soon meet up again, and pick fruit from a restaurant dumpster, a post-apocalyptic Adam and Eve scouring the rotten discards of a trashed paradise. A kindly restaurateur supplies the couple with their first meal together - Coke and Apple Pie - a perverse distortion of the notion of romantic love as a specifically "All American" pastime. Later, Miss Martins sends Donnie across town on an errand, with a box of goodies for the local parish. The elderly Martins is now positioned not as surrogate mother, but as surrogate grandmother- an emblem of extended family - and thus Donnie's character is reinforced as the proverbial innocent who, like the fairy tale heroine Little Red Riding Hood, must traverse the evil woods to deliver goodies to others across the way.

Yet Donnie's budding independence, which seems to hurt far more than help him, gets in the way. He decides to walk instead of taking the bus, and of course meets the motorcycle thugs in the next side street he enters. The thugs, who seem almost magical in their ability to appear everywhere, are a humorous analog to the aforementioned fairy tale's "big bad wolf," who waits in hiding in the dense forest (or city), ready to pounce on wayward innocents transporting victuals. Yet as Donnie gets pummeled yet again, the viewer cannot help but recall that it was Donnie's act of intended autonomy which put him directly in danger's way, suggesting two things. Firstly, the notion of "free will" may be more curse than blessing, as it seems to harm more than help its creator. Secondly, there is also the troubling idea that Donnie subconsciously courts his own destruction, an idea directly in line with certain observations regarding personalities with a masochistic bent, their tendency to seek out sadistic persons who will be all too glad to punish them for their psycho-sexual curiosity. Almost as miraculously as did the thugs, angel Jenny shows up to lick Donnie's wounds and rescue him from his own self-loathing.

Donnie continues his hero's journey with jenny in tow, which involves dropping off a box of old clothes at the local church. Milligan could not but help take this opportunity to bash organized religion, and he does so gleefully, creating in the hilariously-named Reverend Cummings (John Miranda) and his busybody wife (Janet Roberts), two sexuallyobsessed deviates worthy of comparison to Guru, the Mad Monk or the Reverend Algernon Ford. Cummings, for one, after grilling poor Jenny on her sexual activity, attempts to molest the teenager, and the couple leaves the horrible house of god in disgust.

Alone together again, Donnie and Jenny finally share their back stories. Donnie haltingly relates his tale of rejection and betrayal by his mother, making him essentially an orphan. Jenny reveals that she is an actual orphan, her parents having died in a horrible automobile accident which left her, the only survivor, a cripple whom nobody wanted. Jenny describes a harrowing, violent rape by a jock at the tender age of 14, and constant beatings at home. Donnie describes similar treatment by his fearsome mother. Soon, the two are awkwardly attempting a physical embrace, groping blindly for sexual

harmony just like any two "normal" heterosexual nincompoops. Yet Donnie's (and all males') downfall will be the indulgence of his sexual self, his addiction to the infantile thrill of phallic stimulation. This "curse" of puberty leads Donnie to roughly assault Jenny when he means to tenderly embrace her, reinforcing the intrinsic connection between sexuality and violence yet again in a Milligan scenario. The two pathetic lovebirds soon move into Donnie's shack in a pathetic parody of middle-class newlyweds setting up house. They immediately begin to bicker over silly things ("Don't look at me!" "Don't yell at me!") mirroring the awkward squabbling of the neurotically "normal" heterosexual couple trying to cohabitate in a stifling, cage-like space, an adventure surely doomed from the start. Finally, after a tentative, groping embrace, the two innocents succumb to their basest urge, and make sweet love in their filthy hovel. Their lovemaking has an undeniably perverse quality to it - as the two waif-like outsiders, true rejects of society, embrace each other, it is like watching crippled children mating.

Of course, Donnie must now be punished for his grievous sin of sexual release. His cosmic punishment for sin is a forced reunion with his evil mother, a Milligan plot point of great import. "Ma" (Lynne Caryl) is a foul-mouthed, abusive drunkard who slaps her boy around while taunting him with insults like "You are like a big, giant head of cabbage." Donnie's mother further torments him by revealing that his Uncle Eddie, a nasty relative who used to beat up the young lad, was Ma's lover, and is in fact his father! Right on cue, a protagonist is shown to be the product of brother-sister incest, that most ubiquitous diabolical coupling in the Milligan universe, the revelation also explaining in most dire terms the reasons for Donnie's debilitating mental insufficiency. Yet in an even more absurd plot point, Ma subsequently informs Donnie that she has "sold" the boy to an unseen stranger for $1,500, to work as some sort of plantation slave in Mississippi! The hopelessly traumatized youth reacts to these accumulated revelations by beheading the tyrannical matriarch, ending once and for all this failed Oedipal experiment.

Doomed now to extinction due to the slaying of his "master"- an unpardonable sin in the unstated sado-masochistic contract between children and their parents-the unleashed beast in Donnie goes on a killing spree,

targeting and eliminating all those who have oppressed him, who have made him the tortured whipping boy of the community. The slave-owner arrives to gather his newly acquired merchandise and instead conspires with Donnie to "bury" the slain mother, leading to a trademark Milligan pitchfork murder. Next, the Reverend Cumming's nosy wife grills Donnie mercilessly about his sexual activity, so he righteously pierces her black heart with the cross of Jesus. The sexually deviate clergy Cummings is then electrocuted by a string of Christmas lights, a fit ending to one whose declarations of "faith" were used so hypocritically. Returning home for solace, Miss Martins adds to Donnie's woes, revealing her own complicity in Donnie's gnarled family tree: "Your mother is my sister!" A horrified Donnie burns the grandmother-cum-aunt to death, removing the last trace of his ever-widening biological family of monsters.

Meanwhile, while Donnie is out ridding the world of all enemies, Jenny is "at home," sweeping and otherwise cleaning up their horrendous little "love shack" in another absurd mockery of bourgeois domestic bliss- one almost expects Donnie to burst through the door and exclaim, "What a day I had at the office!" But the thugs, hearing about Donnie's all-too-just homicidal rampage, now feel justified in hunting down and killing the innocent, for they are a reactionary political force whose only goal is the extermination of otherthinking individuals, and who chronically refuse to entertain extenuating circumstances or mitigating factors before they judge "others" as guilty. In short, the thugs represent the brute ignorance of "the mob," that ultra-conservative element in society which consistently - and quite effectively - stifles society's best efforts at cultural evolution and intellectual progress.

Donnie meets his sad fate at the hands of the Republican mob, thus completing his part in the sad sado-masochistic ritual which may be at the root of every individual's problematic relationship with his community. Donnie is beaten to death by the vicious fear and ignorance of the male collective and, as always in the Milligan universe, the bad guys win. When Jenny ventures forth later to claim Donnie's body, she observes a mother abusing her small child, witnessing yet another example of the endless circle of vicious human life. Jenny looks up at her god and piteously moans, "Why

can't people be nice to each other?" But Donnie is no longer lying there, merely his suit of clothes. Has he escaped death? Was he a phantom all along? This twist ending - although it was purportedly tacked on after the fact by the producers- reinforces the notion that Weirdo is a modern fable, with magical characters that appear and disappear at will.

Donnie and jenny comprise one of Milligan's most unique and interesting heterosexual couples. They are, in a sense, a somewhat vicious parody of the "dumb heterosexual couple" seen in virtually all previous Milligan films, showing the heterosexual paradigm as literally "retarded" at root. Yet they are also sympathetic creatures, and ultimately heroic in their battle against the evil world of men. In the end, Donnie and jenny are painted as archetypal and mythical, along the lines of the previously mentioned Adam and Eve. Yet both are emotionally repressed, their various deformities and flaws acting as metaphor for such, and this vulnerability makes them easy targets for a predatory community. Donnie and jenny represent the collective soul of one being, and in a rare instance for Milligan, a benign being. Donnie and jenny's sweetness to each other contrasts with pretty much everyone else in the scenario, who are as mean as they can be to individuals seen as weak, ineffectual, inferior. The lovers' mutual empathy suggests that only the disabled, the disinherited, the discarded can be kind, for only they know the cruel whip of the predator. Yet when their attempted spiritual unity degrades into low sexual coupling, the couple falls from grace and is subsequently cursed. As always, sex is ill-advised in the Milligan universe, at best a failed attempt at cosmic unity, at worst, a diabolical conjoining with supernaturally awful consequences for all. It is important to note that it is only after Donnie has had carnal relations with Jenny, that his barely-repressed bestial impulses are unleashed, and all of the murders occur. Sexual awakening has given him the confidence to finally turn on his oppressors, but the intrinsic link between violence and sexuality is also reinforced brutally. To Milligan, sex and violence are two faces of the same beast. A cynic might even paraphrase the plot of Weirdo (and for that matter) Monstrosity) thusly: "Boy meets girl. Boy has sex. Boy loses all."

Weirdo also ruminates on the dire fate of the outsider, who will be alternately abandoned, ignored, abused, exploited and finally terminated by

conformist societal forces so that the community may remain relatively intact. It is thus not surprising to discover that according to Frank Echols, Milligan was himself brutal to Steve Burington, the actor portraying Donnie, during the filming of Weirdo, the harshness on-set spilling out into performance and giving a self-reflexive sheen to Burington's portrayal of society's whipping boy.10 The bittersweet, ill-fated romance between two parties sharing physical, emotional and/or mental handicaps has been treated in film with such dramas as David & Lisa (1962, d: Frank Perry) and Charly (1968, d: Ralph Nelson) Yet so simplistic is the plot of Weirdo, so vivid the characters, one is tempted to call it a fable or post-modern fairy tale. Donnie, for one, is a tragic child-hero drawn from any number of children's fables. Donnie's caretaker becomes a notable incarnation of Little Red Riding Hood's "granny"; the gang which torments Donny can thus be seen as a collective "big bad wolf"; Jenny appears to Donny the first time almost as an angelic, magical creature. As well, there is more than a touch of Hansel and Gretel in the tale of two abandoned "children" who are forced to find their way through a treacherous unknown domain. In fact, the entire film can stand as metaphor for childhood, wherein the growing individual is assimilated into "civilization" only by the sternest "lessons" from decidedly sadistic authority figures (teachers, parents, peers, etc.) But unlike the typical fairy tale, Weirdo does not boast a happy ending, the confusing coda aside. While pure, sweet jenny believes that her partner has somehow escaped death, due to his disappearance in the last scene, it is just as likely that the body was dragged naked into the woods for further mutilation and postmortem anal rape. And irregardless, Jenny's future is dire, as she has no one to champion or protect her from the vicious forces of modern society.

As usual, Milligan wore many hats in the production of Weirdo. In addition to writing, photographing and directing, he acted as editor, art director, set director, make-up man, costume designer and sound supervisor. Indeed, Weirdo comes across as largely autobiographical, and may in fact be the closest thing to a filmic memoir Milligan ever conceived. Even the title suggests a chronological significance, as if the film allegorically depicts the beginning of a tortured life, and how its main subject got to be the "weirdo" he became. According to colleagues, Milligan often referred to himself as a "weirdo," considering himself a hopeless outsider to mainstream society -

even more intriguing is the claim by Milligan that Weirdo is a remake of an earlier, now lost New York production with the same plot and title, suggesting that this tale of an innocent felled by society was extremely important to him." Certainly the abusive alcoholic mother figure rings true as a reincarnation of Milligan's own biological matriarch, and Donny may even be seen as a somewhat selfpitying view of the filmmaker as an innocent puppet to the cruel whip of society.

Weirdo was filmed in vacant lots, junkyards, back alleys and side-streets, highlighting the unsightly, dilapidated underbelly of capitalist America. Weirdo manages to capture a good deal of the old Milligan philosophy, yet it is definitely a product of the 1980s: washedout color photography, terrible fashions, slutty women in big hair, muscle-bound morons, horrible synthesizer music score with bad rock songs predominating, and technically slick but sterile and lifeless gore scenes. One could never confuse this relatively bland production with any of Milligan's dark, raw, grim New York pieces. Weirdo was released directly to home video in the late 1980s, the last Andy Milligan film to receive a legitimate home video release.

Surgikill

The less said about Surgikill, the better. Officially Andy Milligan's last film, it might better be called an error in judgment for all concerned. For Milligan, an ill man desperately in need of funds in his final days, it was likely a purely economic venture. Milligan's presence is notably absent in the finished project, as if the spirit of the man had already fled, leaving only his withering carcass to helm the camera. As for the others involved in this risible production, including the scriptwriters, one can only ponder their hubris in thinking themselves talented when penning such immature dreck. Surgikill falls into that most dreadful of home video genres- the sex-horror comedy- and even within this woeful category fails miserably. Sexy dancing nurses, horny male patients, kooky doctors and bad Laurel and Hardy impersonators do not a movie make, and the infantile sexually-oriented antics which predominate lower the baneful film to the level of hard-core pornography. Needless to say, there is not one hint of Milligan's abiding presence throughout Surgikill, so one must assume that the sick filmmaker

stood behind the camera, took the money and ran. It will be better overall for the Milligan legacy to consider Monstrosity and Weirdo his last films-their ingenious, self-reflexive codas suggest that the filmmaker may have intended them as such - and to relegate Surgikill to the category of abject cinematic error, for which its main victim may be forgiven.

* * *

So what was that "something" which encapsulated Milligan's all-too-brief sojourn to La-La Land? Milligan's last films all touched on the need for society to embrace its misfits, its weirdoes, its monstrosities. As a misfit, weirdo, even monstrosity himself, Milligan surely thought of his own fate at the hands of a cruel and fickle industry as he penned these last screenplays. The softening some see in Milligan's final films is more rightly called a maturing of his philosophy, to acknowledge something akin to resignation and compassion when dealing with the inevitable failure of the human race to approach anything like an admirable behavior towards its fellows. Perhaps tired of tilting at windmills without demonstrable effect, Milligan in his last days seemed to absorb the more laid-back atmosphere of California, shedding the emotional coldness of the East Coast for the relatively carefree atmosphere of the Hollywood scene. (Milligan's California productions all take place in modern times, suggesting also that the filmmaker desired to forsake the classical "Sturm and Drang" of his period pieces for something lighter as well.) Like his last two tragic heroes, Frankie and Donnie, Milligan perhaps finally allowed himself-to some degree - to embrace and revere humanity, as wary as he might have been of being subsequently hurt by such emotional vulnerability. Aware of his imminent death, Milligan may have, in the end, succumbed to at least a half-hearted acceptance of those "beasts by nature" he spent his entire life chastising and mocking in gruesomely vivid, chillingly veracious terms.

Milligan succumbed to his illness on June 3, 1991, at the Queen of Angels Hospital, at the tender age of 62.12 Himself destitute, and mourned only by fellow paupers, Milligan's cremated remains were unceremoniously buried in the hospital's "anonymous mass grave," the equivalent of Potter's Field, the infamous mass burial ground for the indigent in New York City." Like many artists who live and expire largely unnoticed, Milligan lived as a

laughingstock, and died as a nobody. If his films are to be being preserved and discussed as some feel they should be, it will be solely due to Milligan's fans and supporters. Milligan worked like a dog, under impossible conditions, to create his grouchy, antithetical, yet unerringly authentic film art, and it is up to his proclaimed champions to work just as hard in an effort to maintain his rightful legacy.

21

Beasts, by Nature

Andy Milligan's films have been derided as "home movies from bedlam," yet the snarky comment is not far off the mark. Milligan's films are, at their best, a visceral, hyper-kinetic capturing of overwrought characters in discord, filmed casually in real-life locations, with bad lighting, tinny sound, and shaky camera-work adding to, not detracting from, the overall film's disconcerting verisimilitude. Grotesque characters bicker in bizarre patchwork costumes, engaging in addictive violence leading to bloody death, invariably presented via fake, theatrical gore. Milligan's films are brutally existential, often taking place in harsh neo-realist settings, woefully anchored in a most forlorn reality. Almost documentary in spirit, Milligan's cinema has a conspicuous absence of narrative devices traditionally used to frame or soften the overarching plotline-there is nary a wraparound, flashback, hallucination or dream sequence in all of Milligan's oeuvre -for the dark reality of Milligan's worldview is far more "fantastic" that any expositional departure a scenarist could dream up. Milligan does not allow the viewer the luxury of escape into any obtuse expositional detour, forcing him to remain trapped in a peculiarly compelling neo-realist hell-scape.

Virtually single-handedly, Milligan managed to filter Elizabethan-era melodrama through the lens of Victorian morality, mounting it within the post-modern structuralism of Genet, and superimposing over it a wildly expressive sexuality drawn from that ongoing contemporary carnival of fools called the Sexual Revolution. Juggling these many aesthetic and historical layers awkwardly -yet at times brilliantly - Milligan at his best managed to create enduring works which still have the capacity to shock, alienate or ingratiate an audience, an admirable feat which most of his peers cannot lay claim to. The best of Andy Milligan, such as The Body Beneath, The Ghastly Ones and The Man with Two Heads, capture the unbearable angst and inherent insanity of human existence in an almost pure state,

reveling in characters who are caught in an unending whirlpool of moral and physical degradation, their demise always a deadly combination of their own weak will and the cruel machinations of a viciously man-hating Fate.

As for Milligan's extraordinary, shop-worn mise en scene, his impossibly bleak verisimilitude, his shoddy production values, recall that these films were made on the most meager of budgets, and with resources approximating that of the amateur home movie maker, so that the result can be nothing but an example of the mind of its maker. For those who perceive the potential of film as an art form, and further revel in the chance to see the process of creation in the work-to be able to spot and applaud "the hand of the artist"the films of Andy Milligan have no peer. Milligan's film are undeniably as far from the strict Hollywood mythos as a film can possibly get, and to some film lovers, this is the greatest thing a film can be. Shorn of the deadening creative shackles of the studio-film production and marketing blueprint, "little" films like Andy Milligan's become exciting, utterly unique personal statements, coming to life almost as filmed stage plays, creating a singular viewing experience which boasts a vibrancy and resonance which corporate film could not achieve even with a budget of a trillion dollars.'

Although his fanbase grows incrementally, for Milligan to find his rightful audience, to reach that special body of perceptive admirers who will embrace his films' many rough charms may take several more generations to achieve. As history shows, most singular cultural texts are celebrated far outside their time of creation; to paraphrase the poet John Masefield, "works of genius, wait for genius.'" Yet to the astute film lover, Milligan's films are highly accessible today. Through sketchy but indelible depictions of various identifiable historical periods from early Byzantine to late Industrial Revolution, the films of Andy Milligan show people constantly in the throes of greed, lust, violence and madness-behaviors remarkably unchanged from ancient times to the present day. According to the films of Andy Milligan, nothing much has changed in the human condition, as Man is still the infantile, low beast he was during his collective childhood. To observers who protest that sexual perversion, moral degeneracy, the collapse of family and the ascendancy of random violence must be new phenomena indicative of a recently debased culture, Milligan might contradict, with a nod to

Thomas H. Schulman, "'Twas always thus, and always thus will be." As well, the shadow of death, which stalks each and every Milligan film, hangs over the most technologically advanced culture as equitably as it did in primitive times. Thus, the period of the melodrama doesn't matter, as the truth they offer is universal -that Death is always there, waiting to take its own.

The vast majority of humanity has suffered at least some measure of trauma during childhood; few are spared the exquisite, multifarious horrors of growing up surrounded by lunatic adult monsters. Most people absorb the major impact of this experience into themselves, and proceed to become neurotic, repressed adults who struggle to function while constantly battling the legacy of their torturous upbringing. Visionary artists such as Andy Milligan take a nobler path -they choose to vent their collected anguish through creative works, thus purging some of its influence from their psyches. Even more exciting, and constructive to society at large, by viewing the resultant works, an audience can be similarly "exorcised" via the vicarious experiencing of these depictions of universal familial trauma, some aspect of which is likely shared by all citizens.

Milligan told the dark truth of sex and violence and nature, depicted the dumb brutality of desire leading to the diabolical abomination of procreation. This was in direct opposition to the male establishment culture of the day, especially in the sexploitation/pornographic film arena, in which women were alternately feared and worshiped, where the male gaze presented the female simultaneously as a ritual object of beauty, a prize to be sought and won if possible, or else an alien object of horror, an enemy to be targeted, stalked, attacked and hopefully exterminated. Both of these phallo-centric tropes were endlessly fetishized in male-created cinema for the primarily male audience, obsessing interminably on the female body while always planning her conquest and/or extermination. Milligan's view of sex as an abhorrence, of the violent desire found in nature as the all-devouring force which lowers all to cowering animals, did not jibe well with male culture's cunt worship, which declawed woman by putting her on display as an object of contemplation and ritual hatred. Many of Milligan's women, both matriarch and seductress, are wild, untamable crones, as likely to kill

their male admirers as to serve them. Milligan's sexploitation films may have rubbed the contemporary grindhouse audience the wrong way, one possible reason why they seem to have disappeared off the face of the earth.

The preceding analysis of his films is not meant to imply that Milligan inserted his recurring themes and aesthetic quirks consciously into every frame of each film he made. It is impossible, and ultimately meaningless, to know what the filmmaker had "in mind" during his creative efforts. What is important in the films (indeed, in all cultural texts) is awareness by a viewer of the messages and techniques which are conveyed in the work. These "artifacts" of the creator's process are that text's lasting legacy, and their genesis, although interesting, is largely immaterial. This is true of all cultural texts, for all such efforts reflect important aspects of the maker, the prevailing cultural environment, and the peculiarities of the medium used. In his groundbreaking 1911 book on the creative process, Uber das Geistige in der Kunst (Concerning the Spiritual in Art), the abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) stated three fundamental pillars of all creative works: "1. Every artist, as a creator, must express the essence of his own personality; 2. every artist, as a child of his time, must express the essence of his period; 3. every artist, as a servant of art, must express what is the general essence of art."3

This credo rings especially true for our subject. Andy Milligan brought much of his personal history into his films, which reflect endlessly on very personal, very specific, human issues. Milligan winningly channeled the zeitgeist of his era, capturing in stark relief much of the tumultuous social and sexual changes going on at the time. Finally, Milligan used the medium of film in a very idiosyncratic way, making his works personal "signature" works which, due to their various aesthetic conceits, boldly show "the hand of the artist," for many an essential part of successful creative effort. The result, in Milligan's case, is a body of work which successfully captures the spirit of its maker and time, in a medium which lent itself to that particular means of expression.

As seen, the intrinsic core of each and every extant Andy Milligan film is a dysfunctional family, either biologically-based or socially constructed.

While the notion of the problematic family was a hot topic during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the rigid strictures of the dogmatic conformism of the previous decade became unraveled, popular culture's portrayal of this troubled unit usually took the form of the comically bickering family, as in the works of Neil Simon or Norman Lear.' Andy Milligan, seemingly alone among his peers, took the then-fresh trope of the dysfunctional family and imbued it with the pessimism, melodrama and tragedy which the subject surely deserved. Indeed, most of Milligan's films are testaments to the failure of the family unit, the scenario largely mounted to offer witness to the destruction of this unit. And unlike the aforementioned comic treatments of families in discord, which often (although not always) ended on a semi-happy note of negotiated resignation, if not outright reconciliation, Milligan's bad families are bad- they are parasitic social structures, sapping the life out of the rare individual who strives to rise above and escape. To Milligan, the family is an enemy of society, not its bulwark. Furthermore, to Milligan the family is society - its genesis, its sponsor, and certainly its destroyer.'

This focus on the dysfunctional family as symbol for an always-antagonistic social culture introduces another notion which is consistently, and vividly illustrated in the films of Andy Milligan - the individual accounts for nothing. The insignificance of any single human entity is essayed time and time again in the pitiable but inconsequential decline and fall of an army of such characters, the point being that it is the family itself (or the prevailing culture) which will endure, for better or worse. Individual persons are interchangeable, ultimately worthless parts of a societal machine which will perpetuate itself into eternity, thanks to the clueless homo sapiens, whose feckless breeding habits ensure that the vile engine of family and the diabolic machine of culture will always have sufficient numbers to entrap, exploit and finally devour. Thus, the constant moaning and wailing of the always-suffering characters in Milligan's cinema becomes even more pathetic, resembling the vain bleatings of a dying animal caught in a trap in the deep jungle, with no one around to hear his pleas or come to his assistance - an insignificant life, suffered and ended with none to care or notice.

In his only verified cameo, Andy Milligan points an accusatory finger at the audience, alongside Jackie Skarvelis, from the indescribable The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972) (from the collection of Ian Sundahl).

Even this briefest glimpse at his films has hopefully made one thing abundantly clear: Andy Milligan had no use for the human race. In film after film, homo sapiens are depicted as infantile, self-absorbed, divisive, crude, cruel, lustful, manipulative, conspiratorial, violent, destructive creatures, and at their best/worst, purely and efficiently homicidal. As Milligan himself stated through one of his characters, humans are "beasts by nature." In the universe of Andy Milligan, Nature rules, and all man-made social units are doomed to destruction due to their inability to harness the raw evil nature of the human mammal. Nature infests even such sacred social constructs as the family, turning it into a pit of vipers. Nature is author of the bestial, just as

Society is attempted creator of the humane -the irony being that most other species in the animal kingdom are far more "social" (read: humane) than human beings, and few if any other species (chimpanzees are one, according to some observers) consciously set out to destroy neighbors and incite random violence against their fellows. (Since there are perhaps 40,000 chimpanzees worldwide, versus seven billion homo sapiens, we needn't worry unduly about the impact of chimpanzees on the biosphere.) No, human beings are the monsters of Nature, "beasts by nature," and Andy Milligan vividly illustrated this suppressed truth through his raw, angry but mesmerizing art.

Yet the most pervasive overall lesson in the films of Any Milligan, often bestowed upon adult children by their torturous parents, and as often to other hapless characters by a brutal, uncaring fate, is the absolute inevitability of disappointment, torment and ill fortune in all life's affairs, with the specter of sudden, gruesome death always lurking in the shadows. Milligan's mantra might be stated thus: suffering is certain, failure is guaranteed, and mortality is immanent. If not ultimately of any consequence, the perpetual pain and suffering of Milligan's characters must have some alternate reason to exist, and it is in the playful representation of Sadist and Masochist role-playing that this endless human torture fully comes to life, giving these tiresome postures existential and narrative import. Time and again, Milligan states in his films that sado-masochistic violence is the norm, not the exception, in human interaction, a need to dominate and/or acquiesce on the part of (at least) two participants. To be sure, every single character in the Milligan film canon - by definition dysfunctional and psychologically crippled -can thus be placed in one of two overarching categories: beast, or prey. The predators are often, although not exclusively, parent and/or authority figures. An evil mother wields power from the outset, but may in the final analysis be sabotaged by the long-term machinations of a male patriarch lurking in the background. The often-absent father is seen as ineffectual or criminally negligent, but may wield considerable power from behind the scenes. As Jeremy Bentham noted of the Victorian era family - and which could certainly be applied readily to the archetypal Milligan clan - "Every family by nature is an absolute monarchy."6 The role of the parent in Milligan's

film mythos is that of tyrant, dominator, an absolute power figure who functions as the spirit of Sade reincarnated.

As an ill-fated yet necessary counterpart, the victims of these monsters are, as seen, often the children of monstrous parents, and less often citizens in a corrupt, tyrannical society. The frequent evocation of a cabal of sisters is the suggestion of a possibly benign and empowered social unit, although in-fighting usually thwarts this noble aim. Alas, the sons of Milligan's families are by and large ineffectual losers, impotent weaklings who are easy prey for many elements in society, and their own fatal character flaws besides. The Milligan child, employee, servant or lackey largely functions-however reluctantly - as a masochistically-inclined participant in a rigid sado-masochistic "contract," that agreement being one of employment, biology or lineage, and in either case unbreakable and suffocating to all members. Indeed, the dysfunctional Milligan family is often aided -and sometimes thwarted -by a faction of creepy, duplicitous servants, who begrudgingly attend to their masters, while plotting against them later in the service quarters!

Further, the omnipresence of an abstract, freak-like character in Milligan's filmsoften depicted as a sympathetic hunchback - is Milligan's clever if crude portrayal of the outsider, the individual who does not fit into "normal" society and who is thus treated the most harshly by the predominant group. These abstract characters mix pantomime with high histrionics, making them postmodern slapstick creations with great allegorical import, very much in the tradition of Genet, and it is with these bizarre, myth-infused characters that Milligan may have tapped most successfully into the Absurdist Theater tradition. Most radically, this surreal outsider archetype, borne of monsters and abused ritually throughout childhood, also cannily represents Milligan's rather dismal view of his grindhouse audience - the mentally diseased and physically deformed freaks of society, crippled by societal abuse as well as their own base lusts. Milligan knew well that the primary grindhouse audience member was a dissolute, solitary male, a true outsider to society, and likely an alcoholic, drug abuser, criminal and/or sex addict. Igor, Ivan, Tobias, Spool, even Frankie - all are archetypal grindhouse patrons, cruel cartoons of the typical

audience member which Milligan lucklessly had to entertain. It is here where Milligan may most correctly dubbed a "Grindhouse Guru," for it was with these stark portrayals of grotesque and freakish -yet in some ways lovable - victims of cruel fate that the filmmaker alternately admonished and empathized with his original audience, allowing the theater patron to feel solidarity with, or revulsion towards Milligan's ubiquitous "whipping boys."

The assuredly compulsive inclusion of brother-sister incest in the films of Andy Milligan first and foremost served some deep, dark psychological need within the artist, to exorcise his own personal demons, yet its troubling and problematic invocation in the films also serves a significant allegorical purpose. Milligan used conspiratorial sibling clans as metaphorical peer groups, using emotionally-tied brothers and sisters to represent the largely interchangeable pawns of any larger social group, their actions a vivid microcosm of what transpires in any desired communal social setting. That Milligan's siblings so often lay abed together solidifies their function as metaphor for the non-incestuous heterosexual couple, whose actions nonetheless wreak havoc on themselves and their surroundings. The act of incest then acts as emblem of lust in general, and the sexual act specifically, as a filthy, immoral thing, a dire spiritual transgression requiring swift and lasting punishment. This punishment comes in the psychological forms of torturous guilt, neurosis and self-loathing, but also in the sociological forms of estrangement, chastisement, and violent physical correction for sins indulged.

As witnessed, sexual activity in a Milligan film is consistently of an physically aggressive, emotionally demeaning nature, often with overt sado-masochistic overtones. Lust, especially in the male Milligan protagonist, chronically leads to ever more ferocious behavior than the forcing of one's self onto another - sexual desire leads to, and thus becomes almost indistinguishable from, fierce ancillary projects such as rape, battering, and murder. In Western society at least, violence - especially towards the female - seems intrinsically connected to the sexual desire of the male. The obsolete misogynist notion of "hunter and prey" still haunts modern culture's sexual discourse, leading observers such as Andrea Dworkin to note "predatory lust as the one-note meaning of sexual desire.'" Milligan seems to support that

assessment, as his films illustrate her conclusion on the subject: "lust is bloodlust.'"

Intriguingly, Milligan's horror films contain few, if any, supernatural elements, being concerned with the greater horror of the human beast. Where horror characters do arise (The Man with Two Heads) Guru, the Mad Monk, The Body Beneath, The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, Blood, Carnage, Monstrosity), these familiar cultural archetypes are cloaked in their paranormal mantle almost invariably in a peripheral, allegorical manner, their bestial nature used merely to illustrate the essentially savage nature of homo sapiens, who to Milligan are as demonic as any comic-book monster. Thus, the vampires, the werewolves, the monstrous creations, are really merely bad humans "acting" as monsters, in effect using their supernatural claims as defense against antisocial actions which are always motivated by identifiable human emotions (greed, envy, lust), and thus can be attributed to any "mere" human acting selfishly against the community.

Milligan used many playful symbols in his films, all of which were cleverly used to reinforce his conservative agenda regarding the wages of moral transgression. The frequent appearance of a pregnant female (and less frequently, a small child), reminds the viewer of the dire consequences of carnal relations, that human intercourse's sole biological objective is to lure innocent spiritual energy into the prison of material existence. A staircase is often used as symbolic stage to illustrate a character's moral ascent and/or descent, especially a catastrophic moral collapse shown via a tumbling down the stairs. The recurring "murder by pitchfork" evokes antiquarian images of the three-tined pitchfork of the Christian devil, who uses the tool to target and capture sinners in order to drag them into Hell. Speaking of which, the fire-fueled finale of so many Milligan films surely invokes the torturous, unending flames of the Christian Hades, the final destination of all sinners.

And always the bouquet of roses, mocking with their stoic beauty the ugliness which is everywhere to be found in the world of Andy Milligan, a loveless, tormented place in which even beauty may be suspect, for even an apparent facade of beauty usually harbors monstrous evil. The ever-present

bouquet of roses at the dining room table, the family altar, represents the vain attempt at social grace which always wilts in the face of human brutality. The rose symbolizes the divine made flesh, according to Dante, who likely saw it as sublime mystery, whereas Milligan portrays the divine spark trapped in flesh as hell on earth. However, as sex rules the lusty weaklings in the Milligan universe, the rose may finally be most advantageously posited as a mystic symbol of carnality. an emblem of heterosexual desire - always itching, never scratched - and of the female vagina, that source of miracles both profound and horrible. The mystery of the vagina is key to the films of Andy Milligan, for it is here where the dumb male plants his seed, seeking casual pleasure against all admonition, and it is here where the malignity of new life, and thus new suffering, emanates, this "tunnel of love" thus representing both the best and the worst of human experience. To Milligan's dumb heterosexual males, the vagina is a rose which attracts and seduces, then scratches and burns, a sublime and ineffable mystery which only deepens man's obsession with it - or as Germaine Greer terms it, "The mystical rose is CUNT.""

Those insidious twin specters of material incarnation - Eros and Thanatos, anima and animus- haunt the films of Andy Milligan, in the form of the female victim and the male predator, two forces conspiring to thrust innocent spirits into the hell of temporal existence, then punishing these prisoners of the flesh with unending worldly tortures. These specters are almost always manifested in Milligan's films as an "innocent" (read: dumb) heterosexual couple, oblivious to the malign threat of their surroundings as well as their own, highly significant role in the perpetuation of this noxious community into which they stumble. Often, the chosen female and male in a Milligan scenario are accentuated by the presence of the rose and the cross, those revered symbols of ancient occult societies such as the Rosicrucians, who combined them into a logo exemplifying the reconciliation of man's base material self with his higher, spiritual promise. Moreover, the rose and the cross, once wedded, stand for the process of human procreation, perhaps one of the most problematic tropes in the entire Milligan oeuvre. The "female" rose (sublime) beautiful and yielding) succumbs to the "male" cross (stiff, invasive and dogmatic), conspiring together to uphold human reproduction in perpetuity.

Thus, the oblivious, lustful Milligan couple are as guilty as their tormentors, for they are often future parents, and as such, they are future tyrannical torturers of innocent beings as yet unborn, the future destroyer of selfishly created communes, and thus the great enemy of the human spirit, yearning to break free from the agony of anthropoid incarnation. Yet Milligan's "idiots" still fall in love, get married or just "shack up," almost invariably leading to conception, and threatening to spew their degenerate spawn onto an already overcrowded planet, only to abuse and torture and neglect them, assuring them a neurotic adulthood, and a truly miserable existence on this hell-plane called Earth. This endless cycle of human suffering, perpetuated by fools who should know better, is the kernel of the Milligan mythos. As mentioned, Andy Milligan often depicted the intrinsic malevolence of the human race via a signally potent symbol: the pregnant female, whose dire condition ensures the continuation of this noxious species, vanquishing all hope for an eventual end to the madness called human existence.

And speaking of madness, many characters in the films of Andy Milligan escape into the insular mental cocoon of insanity in order to survive an unbearable social situation, often involving the ubiquitous family dynamic. Further, Milligan seems confident in stating that all humanity is mad by definition, that temporal existence itself creates grievous lunatics of us all, the irony being that it is the truly insane individual who considers himself to be completely normal. One must then assume, as Milligan suggests, that all are mad, a theory which certainly seems plausible given the delirious behavior which almost all of Milligan's characters consistently enforce on both strangers and loved ones. As the poets have noted, madness and genius are twins, so one may safely assume that Milligan himself was familiar with the insidious borderland between sanity and madness, as witness his ability to craft such striking manifestations of it on-screen. Along the same lines, one might ponder whether Milligan's characters are deliberately immoral, or merely psychologically broken, but a studied glance at the films confirms that, like all neurotics and criminals and malcontents, these sad wrecks are immoral precisely because they are emotionally wounded, mentally twisted, intellectually pummeled. Milligan's lesson here is that ethical transgression is an inevitable result of a traumatized upbringing, and inseparable from it.

This does not excuse the criminal or sociopath for his actions, the responsibility of which the bearer must own, but merely explains the likely source of these antisocial actions.

Milligan's obsessive deconstruction of the heterosexual paradigm begs the question of his own gender affiliation. An avowed, aggressive homosexual in his social dealings, one must still consider the possibility that Milligan was, in some ways, a terribly conflicted bisexual being, whose obvious affinity for and synchronicity with women - whom he "officially" despised but relentlessly and admirably showcased in every single one of his filmssuggests a tortured longing, unfulfilled. Was Milligan, in fact, a closet heterosexual, a man unwilling or unable to profess his deep, if conflicted love, for the female gender? Milligan's absolute and consistent fascination with women, even (and perhaps especially) in their perfidy and errancy, does not relate to the focus of the traditional homosexual artist, who historically has been more concerned with examining and celebrating male-male relations, with women taking a subsidiary role, if that.

At least, Milligan's ruminations on the female serves as an attempt by the filmmaker to come to terms with his own mother, who betrayed and abused him so mercilessly. Further, Milligan's creation of fantastic matrist societies, seen most conspicuously in the ubiq uitous cabal of sisters, and less frequently in an alliance between servant-women, suggests a desire to fashion some sort of benevolent matriarchy, a wish always undermined by the destructive machinations of patriarchal rule and the inevitable infighting among the women. As discovered earlier, it is not the errant mother figure, but the manipulative father figure, which finally ensures the disintegration of most social units in the Milligan universe; this reality is not even diminished by the patriarch's demise or absence, as the tyrant's agenda is still efficiently carried out by the culture at large, fully in league with an entrenched patriarchy.

Yet clearly, the primary weapon which a cruel god forces on Milligan's weakling bipeds, in order to ensure their destruction, is sex. In Milligan's films, sex is the specter of mortality, the assurance of suffering, the siren call which none can resist. Sex is the male's dumb compulsion and the female's

secret addiction, the bane of sentience, and the tragedy of the human race. As the "good book" intones, the wages of sin is death, and Milligan's films illustrate this ancient nostrum with shocking post-modern clarity. Milligan's characters, to a man, succumb to the brute scourge of the sexual imperative, either by the many idiot traps inherent to dumb lust, or by the subtler, yet even more devastating, repercussions resulting from attempts to forge a biologically-fueled legacy through planned eugenic reproduction. Always these plans fail -lust turns to hate, legacies devour their members with cannibalistic fervor - and the victims moan pitifully as they tremble under the smart whip of a sadistic deity. By vividly depicting these hapless, helpless, loveless, luckless characters, trapped in horrific lives whose travails amount to divine torture, and unleashing these dark fables on an audience he surely despised, Andy Milligan illuminated with frightful candor the evil curse of human existence, and proffered an immutably dark truth he must have believed with his entire soul: humanity is its own crime.

Filmography

Dates are U.S. theatrical/video release dates, where known; otherwise production dates are given. An * after a name indicates a pseudonym for Andy Milligan.

Vapors (circa 1965)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Hope Stansbury, Produced by Gerald Jackson*, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*; Set Decoration: Dick Fox*; Costume Design: Raffine*; Makeup Artist: Walter Moody*; Sound: Joi Gogan*; Lighting Director: Bob Vale*, Title Designer: Vic Lawled, 16mm, 32 minutes, black and white.

With: Robert Dahdah (Mr. Jaffee), Gerald Jacuzzo (Thomas), Hal Sherwood (Miss Parrish), Hal Borske (as "Haal Borske") (Mavis), Richard Goldberger (Thumbelina), Larry Ree (Taffy), Larry Joels (Clerk), Ron Keith (Intruder), Myron Williams (Attendant), Matt Baylor (Man)

The Promiscuous Sex (1967)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Screenplay: Clay Guss, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, aka Liz, The Shocking Sex, 16mm, 94 minutes, black and white.

With: Judith Rentzer (Liz), Richard Mangoode (Michael), Judy Eckhardt (Maxine), Lee Forbes (Mr. Contronia), Candy Hammond (Hazel), Stanley Brock (Sam), Kay Carney (Michael's Mother), Flora Morrell (Liz's Mother), Henry Ansel (Walter), Sylvia Lesser (Bobbie), Robert Dahdah

The Naked Witch (1967)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Clay Guss, Cinematography: Andy Milligan,

Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, aka The Naked Temptress, 16mm, 80/60 minutes, black and white.

With: Beth Porter (Beth), Robert Burgos (Stephan), Bryarly Lee (Bella), Lee Forbes (Hunchback), Maggie Rogers (Mary), Esther Travers (Stephen's Mother), Vernon Newman (Robert), Hal Borske (Willie), Josef Bush (Bud), Phyllis Newman (Robert's Mother), Robert Likola (Jay)

Depraved! (1967)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Freddy Ables, Steve Siegal, Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Produced by ASA Productions, Distributed by J.E.R. Pictures, aka Sin Sisters 2000AD, 16mm, 75 minutes, black and white.

With: Anne Linden (Vera), Robert Burgos (Bob), Carol Vogel (Linda), Josef Bush (Rod), Stephen Hart (Mark), Ellen Oyam (Polly), Hope Stansbury (Lee)

The Degenerates (1967)

Directed by Andy Milligan; Screenplay: Gerald Jacuzzo, Andy Milligan; Produced by Andy Milligan; Makeup Artist: Walter Moody*, Produced by ASA Productions, Distributed by J.E.R. Pictures, 73 minutes, Black and White

With: Bryarly Lee (Violet), Marcia Howard (Iris), Anne Linden (Daisy), Susan Howard (Rose), Laura Weiss (Lily), Hope Stansbury (Ivy), Robert Burgos (Jim), Vernon Newman (GoGo), David Haine (Frank)

Compass Rose (circa 1967)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Josef Bush, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, 16mm, 73 minutes, black and white.

With: Matt Baylor (Brandex), Hal Borske (Doctor), Kenny Burges(s), Joe Davies, Candy Hammond (Olive), Gerald Jacuzzo, Anne Linden (Miss

Gloria), Anthony Moscini (Dewey), Robert Patrick (Waiter), Maggie Rogers, Jenneth Webster

The Gay Life (circa 1967)

Directed by Gerald Jackson*

Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! (1968)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Story by William Mishkin, Screenplay by Josef Bush, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Title Song: Harry Huret, Produced by Extraordinary Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 80 minutes, black and white.

With: Natalie Rogers (Jean Novack), Don Williams (Stan Novak), Peter Ratray (Eddie), Joy Martin (Ellen), Angela Peters (Lurlene), Matt Baylor (Dominic), Gerald Jacuzzo (Ray), Esther Travers (Ma), Veronica Radburn (Mrs. Scilletto), Nick Orzel (Sal), Alan Sedan (Lou), Sean Martin (Jimmy), Robert Dahdah

The Ghastly Ones (1968)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Freddy Ables, Steve Siegal, Jerry Balsam, "JeromeFredric," Screenplay by Hal Sherwood, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Lighting: Jim Vale*, Settings: James Fox*, Costume Design: Raffine*, Sound: Joi Gogan*, Makeup: Jerry Rome, Continuity: Willis Reed, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Technical Director: Matt Baylor, Produced by ASA Productions, Distributed by J.E.R. Pictures, aka Blood Rites, 16mm, 81/72 minutes, color.

With: Veronica Radburn (Martha), Maggie Rogers (Hattie), Hal Borske (Colin Trask), Anne Linden (Vicky), Fib LaBlanque (Rich), Carol Vogel (Liz), Richard Romanus (as "Richard Romanos") (Don), Eileen Hayes (as "Eileen Haves") (Veronica), Don Williams (Bill), Hal Sherwood (Walter), Neil Flanagan (as "Niel Flanagan") (Lawyer Dobbs), Ada McAllister (Ada), Robert Adsit (Robert), Matt Baylor (Waiter, uncredited)

Tricks of the Trade (1968)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Screenplay by Gerald Jacuzzo, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, aka The Sex Set-Up, Run for Your Wife, Produced by Extraordinary Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 83 minutes, black and white.

With: Mary Carter (Salina Claret), Jonathan East (Fred Claret), Natalie Rogers (Dr. Pauline Flood), Josephine White (Freda), June Blake (Marcy Perkins), Mostifa Mond (Stud Perkins), Maggie Rogers (Minnie Cry), Keith Teak (Misery), Ivan Smith (Four Eyes), Hal Borske (Bruce), Miriam Levinson (Betsy), Diana May (The Girl), Maha (The Woman), Robert Patrick (Bartender), Jack Hoffman (Jack Foster), Neil Flanagan (Milburn), Jack Hollister (First Man), Gary Owen (Second Man)

The Filthy Five (1968)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Gerald Jacuzzo, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Produced by Extraordinary Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, aka The Filthy 5, The F----y Five, 16mm, 96 minutes, black and white

With: Anne Linden (Rita Roman), Frederic Forrest (as "Matt Garth") (Johnny Longo), Jacque/ Jacqui Lynn Colton (as "Jackie Colton") (Rose White), Nick Orzel (Barney), Maya Reid (as "Maha") (Allison), Gerald Jacuzzo (Sidney Hart), Mark Jenkins (Billy Delavanti), Maggie Rogers (Ma Delavanti), Mary Carter (Brenda Case), Larry Ree (Freakout), Hal Borske (as "Haal Borske") (Walter Cash), Magie Dominic (as "Maggie Dominic") (Teeny Bopper), Selena Robins (Stripper)

Nightbirds (1968)

Written, Directed and Photographed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Leslie Elliot, Settings: James Fox*, Sound: Joi Gogan*, Costumes: Raffine*, Lighting: James Vale*, Technical Director: Susan Heard, Production

Assistant: John Borske, Produced by Cinemedia Films, Distributed by Nova International Productions (U.S.), 16mm, 75 minutes, black and white.

With: Julie Shaw (Dolores, aka "Dee"), Berwick Kaler (Donald, aka "Dink"), Elaine Shore (Mabel), Bill Clancy (Ginger), Bay White (Dee's Mother), Jonathan Borkai (Shopkeeper), Felicity Sentence (First Girl), Susan Joyce (Second Girl), Susan McCormick (Rosie), Tom Houlden (Tom), Greg Mcintire (Young Man), Susan Heard (Maid)

Seeds(1968)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by John Borske (uncredited), Andy Milligan, Produced by Allen Bazzini, Rosily Bazzini, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Costume Design: Andy Milligan (uncredited), aka Seeds of Sin, Presented by Aquarian Productions, Distributed by Harrington Film Distributing, 16mm, 84/78 minutes, black and white.

With: Maggie Rogers (Claris Manning), Candy Hammond (Carol), Anthony Moscini (as "Robert Service") (Michael), Lucy Silvay (as "Helena Velos") (Margaret), Neil Flanagan (Father Mathew), Gene Connolly (Buster), David Hazard (Drew), Jonathan East (Peter), Patricia Dillon (as "Pauline Ramsey") (Jessica), Paul Eden (as "Paul Coen") (Dr. Kram), Jesse Bigelow (Mortimer), Susan Cassidy (as "Lisa Hart") (Barbara), Eileen Hayes (as "Eileen Haves") (Susan), Jerry Cortez (Jonathan), Rita Benning (Miss Bundy), Magie Dominic (as "Maggie Dominic") (Bonita), Lee Rand (Slippery)

Gutter Trash (1969)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Screenplay by John Borske, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Produced by Extraordinary Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, aka Male & Female Sexualis, 16mm, 74 minutes, black and white.

With: Candy Hammond (Pussy Johnson), Eddie Frackman (Nick), Patricia Dillon (Stix), Paul Eden (CooCoo Corbett), Susan Cassidy (Minky),

Neil Flanagan (Bunny), David Smith (Bill Larch), Suzanne Gilbert (Sandra Larch), Zita Litvanas (Louise), Buddy Jarvis (Marsh Thompson), Ada McAllister (Lorry), Jesse Bigelow (Doctor), Maya Reid (Miss B.), Anthony Moscini (Chris)

The Bitch (circa 1969, unfinished)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, aka The Mongrel

With: Jacqui Colton

The Weirdo (circa 1969, unreleased)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan

With: Michael St. Shaw, Melinda Dockery, Maya Reid

The Body Beneath (1970)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Leslie Elliot, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Set Decoration: James Fox*, Costume Design: Raffine*, Production Manager: Graham Steane, Sound: Joi Gogan*, Lighting Director: Jim Vale*, Technical Director: William Barrel, aka Vampire's Thirst, Produced by Cinemedia Films, Distributed by Nova International Productions, 16mm, 85/82 minutes, color.

With: Gavin Reed (The Rev. Alexander Algernon Ford), Jackie Skarvellis (Susan Ford), Berwick Kaler (Spool), Susan Heard (Alica Ford), Richmond Ross (Paul Donati), Emma Jones (Candace Ford), Colin Gordon (Graham Ford), Judith Heard (Elizabeth), Felicity Sentance (Jessie), Susan Clark (Anna Ford), Victor Parish (Cemetery Assistant)

Torture Dungeon (1970)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Screenplay by John Borske, Andy

Milligan, Settings: James Fox*, Costumes: Raffine*, Lighting: Jim Vale*, Make-Up: Walter Terry*, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Sound: Joi Gogan*, Decorations: Elaine*, Script Girl: Lois Jay, Art Director: Neil Lewis*, Technical Director: John Borske, aka Dungeon of Death, Produced by Constitution Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 79 minutes, color.

With: Gerald Jacuzzo (as "Jeremy Brooks") (Norman, Duke of Norwich), Susan Cassidy (Heather MacGregor), Patricia Dillon (Lady Jane), Neil Flanagan (Peter the Eye), Richard Mason (Ivan the Hunchback), Maggie Rogers (One-Eyed Hag), Hal Borske (as "Haal Borske") (Alfred, Duke of Aberthy), Donna Whitfield (Lady Agatha), George Box, Patricia Garvey (Rosemary), Dan Tyra, Helen Adams, Robert Fucello, Robert Fricelle (uncredited), Matt Baylor (prisoner, uncredited)

Bloodthirsty Butchers (1970)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Screenplay: John Borske, Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing by Gerald Jackson*; Art Direction: Elaine*; Settings: James Fox*; Costume Design: Raffine*; Makeup Artist: Walter Terry"; Sound: William Barrel; Special Effects: Marcia Neilson; Lighting Technician: Hillary Wasp; Script Girl: Ruth Golush; Technical Director: Susan Heard; Decorations: Sonia Maye; Produced by Constitution Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 85/78 minutes, color.

With: John Miranda (Sweeney Todd), Annabella Wood (Johanna Jeffrey), Berwick Kaler (as the "Head" Butcher, Tobias Ragg), Jane Hilary (Maggie Lovett), Michael Cox (Jarvis Williams), Linda Driver (Becky Todd), William Barrel (Mr. Busker), Jonathan Holt (John Lovett), Susan Cassidy (Anna), David Pike (Mr. Fisk), Frank Echols (Barbershop Victim), Ann Arrow (Rosie), Shirley Ashdown (Mrs. Spool), Dickson Bain (Police Constable), George Barry (Corky), James Barrie [unverified]

Guru, the Mad Monk (1970)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Story: "M.A. Izak Maipix Co.," Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Produced by M.A. Isaacs, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Artistic Director: Lillian Greneker, Assistant Director: Tom Moten, Technical Director: Tom Mullaney, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Settings: James Fox*, Sound: K'Pagune*, Lighting: James Vale*, Props: Jeffrey Isaacs, Produced by Maipix Organization, Distributed by Nova International Productions, aka Garu, the Mad Monk, 35mm, 62/56 minutes, color.

With: Neil Flanagan (Father Guru), Jaqueline Webb (Olga), Judith Israel (Nadja), Jack Spencer (Igor), Frank Echols (Bishop Kopel), Gerald Jacuzzo (as "Jeremy Brooks") (Father Polanski), Paul Lieber (Carl), Julia Wills (Christine), Ron Keith (Lars), Myschka (Mara), Irving Metzman (Hans), Jeffrey Isaacs (Altar Boy), Roy/Ron Gordon (Altar Boy), Stanley Herbert (Prison Guard), Billy Hoffman (Prison Guard), Tom Mullaney (Young Stranger), Joe Pichette (as "Joseph Pichette") (Parishioner), Joan Durant

The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Technical Director: Susan Heard, Production Manager: William Barrel, Assistant Director: Graham Steane, Set Director: Jim Fox*, Lighting: Bob Vale*, Make-Up: Walter Moody," Wardrobe: Raffine*, Sound: Roy Webb, Hair Stylist: Elaine*, Set Supervisor: Neal Lewis*, Script Girl: Marcia Lois Jay, aka Curse of the Full Moon, Produced by Constitution Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 92 minutes, color.

With: Hope Stansbury (Monica Mooney), Jackie Skarvellis (as "Jackie Skarvelis") (Diana), Noel Collins (Mortimer Mooney), Joan Ogden (Phoebe Mooney), Douglas Phair (Pa Mooney), Ian Innes (Gerald), Berwick Kaler (Malcolm Mooney), Chris Shore, George Clark, Lillian Frith, Andy Milligan (uncredited, gun salesman), Eric Concklin [unverified]

The Man with Two Heads (1972)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Story: Robert Louis Stevenson (as "Robert Louis Stephenson"), Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Technical Director: Susan Heard, Production Manager: William Barrel, Assistant Director: Graham Steane, Set Director: Jim Fox*, Lighting: Bob Vale*, Make-Up: Walter Moody*, Wardrobe: Raffine*, Sound: Roy Webb, Hair Styles: Elaine*, Set Supervisor: Neal Lewis*, Script Girl: Marcia Lois Jay, Editor: Gerald Jackson, Pub Song: David Tike, aka The Man with Two Faces, Produced by Constitution Films, Distributed by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, Distributed by Constitution Films, 16mm, 92/80 minutes, color.

With: Denis DeMarne (Dr. William Jekyll/Danny), Gay Feld (Mary Ann Marsden), April Connors (Julia Stratton) (as "April Conners"), Jaqueline Lawrence (Carla Jekyll), Berwick Kaler (Jack Smithers), Jennifer Summerfield (Victoria Crenshaw), Bryan Southcombe (Oliver Marsden), Gerald Jacuzzo (as "Jeremy Brooks"), Laurence Davies, Raymond Cross, William Barrel (as "W. Barrell"), Grahame Steane, Craig Malcolmson, Janis Servals, Mary Ann Turner, Patricia Thorn, Katherine Maitland, Angela Hill, Doreen Davies, Karina Tamahine, Guido Adorni, Simon Coady, Frank Dougherty, Tony Parkin, Louis Raynes, Jim Wilson

Fleshpot on 42nd Street (1973)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*; Sets: James Vale*, Sound: Joi Gogan*; Lighting: Jim Fox*; Costumer: Raffine*; Production Coordinator: Craig Malcolmson; Technical Director: Peter Strader, aka The Girls on 42nd Street, Produced by William Mishkin Motion Pictures, 16mm, 84/81/77 minutes, color.

With: Laura Cannon (as "Diana Lewis") (Dusty Cole); Neil Flanagan (as "Lynn Flanagan") (Cherry Lane); Harry Reems (as "Bob Walters") (Bob); Paul Matthews (Jimmie); Daniel Dietrich (Billy), Frank Corso (Carl), Marjean deGroot (Hooker in bar), Joe Downing, Earle Edgerton (Sammy), Melissa Gabel (Hooker in bar), Ken Hill (Walt), Tony Johnson (Mac), Ron Keith (Cal), Fred Larch, Fred J. Lincoln (Joe-Card Player), Dorin McGough

(Sally Simmons), Bob Olson, Sue Pagano (Hooker in bar), Richard Towers (as "Joe Powers") (Tony); Conrad Ward; M.A. Whiteside (Susie Simmons)

Supercool (circa 1973, unfinished)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Lew Mishkin, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, aka Sharon

Dragula (circa 1973, unreleased, Andy Milligan's participation unknown)

With: Cal Culver, Hal Borske, Fernando

Jungle Bust (circa 1973)

Produced by Walter Kent, Andy Milligan (some cinematography and editing)

Blood (1974)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Walter Kent, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*, Set Decoration: Jim Fox*, Costume Design: Raffine*, Special Makeup Designer: Ted Donovan, Second Unit Director: Joseph Miller, Sound: Joe Downing, Costume Supervisor: Agatha Miller, Production Coordinator: Irwin Barash, Technical Director: Craig Malcolmson, Distributed by Bryanston Pictures, Damiano Film Productions (1976 re-release), 35mm, 74/57 minutes, Color.

With: Allan Berendt (Dr. Lawrence Talbot/Orlovsky), Hope Stansbury (Regina Dracula Talbot/Orlovsky), Patricia Gaul (Carrie), Michael Fischetti (Orlando), Pichulina Hempi (Carlotta), Pamela Adams (Prudence Towers), John Wallowitch (Carl Root), Martin Reymert (Mr. Markham, realtor), David Bevans (Johnny, Carrie's brother), Eve Crosby (Petra, the hag Joe Downing (The New Realtor), Lawrence Seelars (Baron von Frankenstein), Sophia Andoniadis (Mme. von Frankenstein), Hazel Wolffs (Woman Next Door)

Legacy of Horror (1978)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay: Andy Milligan, Presented by Ken Lane, Produced by George Burke, Don Resse, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Editing: Gerald Jackson*; Set Decoration: Joi Gogan*, Sound: Denise Lovece, Lighting: Robert Worth, Make Up - Hair Styles: Walter Ballester, Costumes: Raffine*, Continuity: Lisa Boies, Head Grip: Gus Lovece, Produced by Take One Film Group; Distributed by Ken Lane Films, aka Legacy of Blood, 35mm, 83/78 minutes, color.

With: Elaine Boies (Margaret), Jeannie Cusick (Louise), Louise Gallanda (Jennifer), Joe Downing (James Smith), Peter Barcia (John), Marilee Troncone (Mary), Chris Broderick (Carl), Dale Hansen (Regina), Stanley Schwartz (Robert Burke), Carla Wentworth (Sylvia Cunningham), Martin Reymert (Schaeffer), Kathryn Capofari (Martha), John Schiumo (Ito), Fred Keller (1st Man), Dan Handley (2nd Man), Bob Elia (Baba), Lisa Boies (Eena), Eve Adamson (Alice), Kathryn Likss (Customer), Walter Ballester (Waiter), Lynn Snyder (Charlotte), Sherri Synder (Susan), Jack Boies (Caretaker), John Tarantino (William), Charles Richards* (Mailman), Jason Boies (Boy), Ann Ogilvie (Woman)

House of Seven Belles (circa 1979, unfinished)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, 35mm, color

With: Hal Borske, Louise Schiumo, Randa Kriss, Elainse Boies

Toga Party (circa 1980)

Andy Milligan filmed inserts only

Carnage (1986, video release)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Produced by Lew Mishkin, Michael Lee, Editing: Gerald Bronson, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Assistant Director: Gerald Jackson, Sound Editor: Gene Jones, Sound: Dennis Malvasi, Grip: Joi Gogan*, Lighting Technician: Andrew Willis, Transportation Coordinator: Richard Gleasi, Interior

Consultant: Richard Karlson, Production Assistant: Kathy Zoumis; Produced by Jaylo International Films, Distributed by Media Home Entertainment, Video Treasures, aka Hell House, 35mm, 92 minutes, color.

With: Leslie Den Dooven (Carol Henderson), Michael Chiodo (Jonathan Henderson), John Garitt (Walter), Deeann Veeder (Susan), Chris Baker (Ann Webb), Jack Poggi (Minister), Dennis Malvasi (as "Albert Alfano")(Tony), Che Moody (Mother-in-Law), Rosemary Egan (Margaret), Ellen Orchid (Judy), Chris Georges (Mark Webb), Bill Grant (Dad), Judith Mayes (Martha), Lola Ross (Rose Novak), Lon Freeman (Nathan Frye), Joseph Vitagliano (Plumber), Victor Logan (Dr. Marcus), Willis Karp (Ray Trail), Susan Ortiz (Secretary), William Cooner (Burglar #1), David Marks (Burglar #2)

Red Rooster (circa 1983, unreleased)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Dan Tobey, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, 16mm, color

With: Hal Borske, Leslie Den Dooven

Monstrosity (1989, video release)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by William Mishkin, Lew Mishkin, Alexander W. Kogan Jr., Barry Tucker, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Special Makeup Effects Artist: Rodd Matsui, Sound effects and original music: Larry Wilkins, Sets and Costumes: Raffine'*, Art Director: A. Mills, Publicist: Jay Robins, Titles: Michelle Marc, Assistant Camera: Frank Echols, Production Manager: Jimmy McDonough, Sound: Scott Means, Production Coordinator: Charlie Beesley, Editor: Andy Milligan, Assistant Editors: Frank Echols, Jimmy McDonough, Charlie Beesley, Still Photographer: Thomas Vozza, Stand-In: Jimmy McDonough, Produced by Lew Mishkin Productions, Distributed by Jaylo International Films and Filmworld Productions, 92 minutes, color

With: Hal Borske (as "Haal Borske") (Frankie), Carrie Anita (Jaimie), Michael Lunsford (Scott), Joe Balogh (Carlos), David Homb (Mark), Sheila

King (Carol), Carol Zarlengo (Dolores), Audra Marie Ribiero (Ronnie), Tommy Voager (Clay Cole), Joel Weiss (Angelo), Joe Darrel (Kyle), Charles Prior (as "Chuck Price") (Savage), Larry Wilkins (K.C.), Helen Costa (Agnes), Al Silver (Detective Evans), Alan F. Ross (Detective Robinson), Sylvia Owens (Boots), Kent Kapossi (Candy), Stassia Christy (Hooker), Richard Bolik (Old Man), Dale Kenney (Doctor), Aurora (Lady in grocery store), Bouvier (as "Dawn Rivers") (Lady in car), Frank Echols, Wayne Keeton, Charlie Beesley

Weirdo: The Beginning (1989, video release)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Produced by Kenneth Haker, Neva Friedenn, Paul Maslak, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Music: Michael Meros, Jeff Peters, Production Manager: Frank Echols, Assistant Camera: Charles Beasley, Focus Puller: Charles Beasley, Sound: Scott Means, Slate Man: B. Wayne Keaton, Editing: Andy Milligan, Scott Means, Art Director: Gerald Jackson*, Set Director: "James Vail," Make-Up: Joi Gogan*, Prosthetics: Rodd Matsui, Costumes: Raffine*, Wardrobe: Jean Ferguson, Production Still Photographers: Tom Vozza, Dennis Robbins, Gerry Lopez, Chris Marlow, Post-Production Supervisors: Kenneth Haker, Paul Maslak, Nova Friedenn, Negative Cutters: Andy Milligan, Scott Means, Music Editor: Robert Ulrich, Sound Effects Editor: Smith Craig, Foley Recordist: Smith Craig, Foley Walkers: Robert Ulrich, Richard Schreiner, ADR: Smith Craig, Robert Ulrich, Sound Mix Supervisor: Andy Milligan, Sound Mixer: Smith Craig, Telecine Transfer: Sati Tooray, Produced by Green Tiger Pictures, Distributed by Unifilm International Company (theatrical), Raedon Video (VHS), 91 minutes, color.

With: Steve Burington (Donnie), Jessica Straus (Jenny), Lynne Angus (Lisa), Nick Butterfield (Ranger), Gina Carrera (as "Julie Winchester") (Boots) , Lynne Caryl (Ma), Melanie Ewbank (Rhoda), Shari Michaels (Mother in Park), Jennifer Erin Morse (Child in Park), Carroll Oden (Mr. Price), Shawn Player (Nails), John Miranda (as "John Rand") (The Reverend Cummings), Dennis Robbins (Vic), Janet Roberts (Mrs. Cummings), Naomi Sherwood (Miss Martins), John Taylor (Bill The Counterman), Patrick

Thomas (Dean), Richard C. Forrest, Bill Grey, Anthony Rinaldi, Kim Clark, Robert Peck, Mary Locke, Jeff Davidson, Scot Vandergrift

Surgikill (1989)

Directed by Andy Milligan, Executive Producers: John Van Harlingen, Alexander W. Kogan Jr., Barry Tucker, Screenplay by Andy Milligan, Original Story by Sherman Hirsh, Cinematography: Andy Milligan, Music: Tisa Adamson, Set Decoration: James Vale*, Makeup Artist: Joi Gogan*, Production Manager: Frank Echols, Assistant Director: Scott Pfeiffer, Editors: Andy Milligan, Jim Allen, Art Director: Gerald Jackson*, Costumes: Raffine*, Negative Cutter: Andy Milligan, Special Music: Tom Barger, Special Music composed produced and arranged by Jeff Peters, Tisa Adamson, Foley Recordist: Smith Craig, Sound: Scott Means, Jim Allen, Assistant Camera: Charles Beasley, Still Photographer: Thomas Vozza, Slate Man: B. Wayne Keeton, "A Good Community Hospital Production," Produced by Media Arts Productions, aka Screwball Hospital Central, 88 minutes, color.

With: "Bouvier" (Dr. Grace Goode), Dan Foster Jones (Nurse Ratchitt), Michael Lunsford (Dr. Harvey Harvey), Doug Eames (Dr. Albert Schweitzer), Al Silver (Dr. Howard Fine), Richard Bolik (Dr. Payne), Peter Linari (Mr. Gross), Carroll Oden (Lou Pohl), Shari London (Nurse Charity Muffit), Jeremy Logan (Norman), Linda Collins (Nurse Bernice Boobs), Patrick Thomas (Arnold), Lynne Angus (Nurse Wanda Tryitt), Michael Buckband (Floyd), Jim Allen (Lizard Lipz), Robert Odell (Sty Sickem), Kip Reynolds (Stubby), Rahn Sargeant (Slim), Patrick Didier (Carl Cure), Sparkle Stillman (Emily), Brian Brock (Muscles), Madge Bryant (Mrs. Ignatz), Scott Dorfman (Barry More), John Williams (Bronson), John Rand (P.J. Smiley), Patrisha Zohren (Maude), Julia Meyers (Agnes), J.R. Ripley (Cyclist 1), Robert Buckband (Cyclist 2), Frank Echols (Man in car), Ken Pierce (Texan hat), Al Strawberry (Burn Victim), Angela Allen (Muscle's Wife), Anthony Rinaldi (Paramedic 1), Mary Rankl (Scrubwoman), Ken Grant (Man With Plant), Bruce Straaton (Patient), Bob Peck (Patient), Richard Forrest (Patient), Anthony Rinaldi (Patient), Jimmy Williams (Patient), Jeff Davidson (Patient), Barbara Detro (Patient), Kim Clark

(Patient), Dana Whitaker (Patient), Francis Nakata (Japanese Tourist), George Hayashida (Japanese Tourist), Toshiko Hayashida (Japanese Tourist)

Appendix: Films Distributed or Produced by William Mishkin

Listed in order of U.S. theatrical release by Mishkin

(d = distributor, p = producer, st = story)

The Man from Yesterday (1949, original production, UK)(d)

Tainted (1950, original production: Le visiteur, 1946, France)(d)

Secret Scandal (1953, original production: Hometown Girl, 1948)

Violated (1953)(d,p,st)

Strips Around the World (1955, original production: Bagdad After Midnight, 1954)(d)

Too Hot to Handle (1955, original production: 1950)(d)

Rock & Roll Burlesque (1955, original production: Burlesque in Harlem, 1954)(d)

Fig Leaf Frolics (1955, original production: Ready for a Take-Off, 1954)(d)

Streets of Sorrow (1957, original production: Ho sognato it paradiso, 1949, Italy)(d)

Broadway Burlesque (1957, original production, 1957, short) (d)

Sins of the Flesh (1958, original production: Carcerato, 1951, Italy)(d)

Female Slaves (1958, original production: The Wages of Sin, 1938)(d)

Illicit Motherhood (1959, original production: Maternite clandestine, 1953, France)(d)

The Shameless Sex (1959, original production: Wanda la peccatrice, 1952, Italy/France)(d)

Hoodlum Girls (1959, original production: Youth Aflame, 1944)(d)

Teenage Jungle (1959, original production: Teen Age, 1944)(d)

Secrets of a Model School (1959, original production: Secrets of a Model, 1940)(d)

Night Girls (1960, original production: Natlogi betalt, 1957, Denmark) (d)

Cute and Curvy (1960, original production: Kiss Me Baby, 1957)(d)

The Naked and the Wicked (1960, original production: Core 'ngrato, 1951, Italy)(d)

No Morals (1961, original production: M'sieur la Caille, 1955, France)

Fever Heat (1961, original production: Bob leflambeur, 1956, France)(d)

Love at Night (1961, original production: Impasse des vertus, 1955, France) (d)

Vice Dolls (1961, original production: Les clandestines, 1954, France)(d)

Palace of Nudes (1961, original production: Crime an Concert Mayol, 1954, Italy/France)(d)

Hotbed of Sin (1961, original production: Boite de nuit, 1951, France)(d)

Male and Female Since Adam and Eve (1961 Argentina)(d)

Indecent (1962, original production: Schwarze Nylons-Heif3e Niichte, 1958, West Germany)(d)

Pleasures and Vices (1962, original production: Gueule d'ange, 1955, France)(d)

Naked in the Wind (1962, original production: L'ile aux femmes nues, 1953, France)(d)

Traveling Light (1962, original production: Sun Swept, 1961, U.K.)

The Amorous Sex (1962, original production: Sweet Beat, 1959, U.K.)(d)

Kipling's Women (1962, original production, 1961, U.S./U.K.)(d)

Nudist Memories (1962, original production, 1961, short)(d)

Steam Heat (1963, original production: The Immoral Mr. Teas, 1959)(d)

Orgy at Lil's Place (1963) (d)

Europe in the Raw (1963)(d)

Wild Is My Love (1963)(d)

The Ruined Bruin (1963, original production, 1961)(d) (U.S. release title unknown) (1964, original production: Voyage a trois, 1950, France)(d)

Naked in Paradise (1965)(d)

The Wife Swappers (1965)(d)

The Sexperts: Touched by Temptation (1965)(d,p)

One Naked Night (1965) (d)

The Skin Game (1965, original production: K.I.L. 1, 1962, U.K.)(d)

Heat of Madness (1966)(d)

Caught in the Act! (1966) (d,p)

The Naked Witch (1967)(d,p)

The Promiscuous Sex (1967) (d,p)

Sex and the Single Sailor (1967, original production: 0 monahikos naftis kai to koritsi, Canada/ Greece)(d)

$100 a Night (1968, original production: Madchen fur die Mambo-Bar, 1959, West Germany)(d)

Tricks of the Trade (1968)(d,p)

The Filthy Five (1968) (d,p)

Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me! (1968)(d,p,st)

Spoils of the Night (1969, original production: Iro, 1966, Japan)(d) (subtitled)

Love Now, Pay Later (1969, original production: Linferno addosso, 1959, Italy)(d)

The Game of Sex (1969, original production: The Game Is Sex, U.K.)(d)

Gutter Trash (1969)(d)

Seven Consenting Adults (1970, original production: Polizeirevier Davidswache, 1964, West Germany) (d)

Sexual Practices in Sweden (1970) (d)

Bloodthirsty Butchers (1970) (d,p)

Torture Dungeon (1970) (d,p)

Beyond Control (1971, original production: Sommersprossen (1968, West Germany/Italy)(d)

All About Sex of All Nations (1971) (d)

The Man with Two Heads (1972)(d,p)

The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (1972)(d,p)

Love-In '72 (1972)(d,p)

Filthiest Show in Town (1973)(d)

Fleshpot on 42nd Street (1973)(d,p) (aka The Girls of 42nd Street)

Hot Times (1974)(d,p) (aka My Erotic Fantasies, XXX version, 1976)(d)

Intimate Teenager (1975, original production: Schlusselloch-Report, 1973, Germany)(d) (1975)

Penetration (1975, original production: Rivelazioni di un maniaco sessuale al capo della squadra mobile, 1972)(d)

The Broad Coalition (1977, original production, 1972)(d)

Fight for Your Life (1977)(d,p) (aka)

Pelvis (1977)(d)

A Matter of Love (1979) (d,p) (aka Coming Together, XXX version)

The Nesting (1981)(d)

Bruce Is Loose (1983, original production: Qing long ke zhan, 1977, Taiwan) (d)

Chapter Notes

Chapter 1

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11. Robert Patrick, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 45.

12. Dominic, 55.

13. Ibid., 52.

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18. Marshall W. Mason, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 19.

19. Robert Patrick, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 44.

20. Bob Shields, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 63.

21. Mari-Claire Charba, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 71.

22. Robert Dahdah, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 91.

23. H.M. Koutoukas, Caffe Cino Benefit (program), March 15, 1965.

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25. Stone, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 17.

26. Dominic, 57.

27. Mason, Return to the Caffe Cino, eds. Susoyev and Birimisa, 19.

28. Dominic, 60.

29. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 61.

30. Dominic, 83-84.

Chapter 2

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3. Freud, Three Essays, 166.

4. Ibid., 180-181.

5. Bonaparte, 182.

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16. Mel Gordon, The Grand Guignol: Theatre of Fear and Terror (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 28.

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3. Sitney, 134.

4. Ibid., 93.

5. Landis and Clifford, Anger, 55.

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11. Ibid., 117.

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58. Ronald Hayman, Fassbinder, Film Maker (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 30.

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4. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog#52, 1999, 35-36.

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26. Ibid., 121.

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28. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express: A MindTwisting Tour Through the Grindhouse Cinema ofTimes Square (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 166.

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107. Friedman, 59.

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3. Elsewhere, Eric Schaefer states that Astor Pictures sold the rights to Hometown Girl to Don Kay in 1956, at which point he changed the title to Secret Scandal and leased the film to William Mishkin for New York distribution. This contradicts an archive photograph showing Secret Scandal already playing the bottom of a double bill with the 1953 premiere of

Mishkin's Violated. It is likely that Secret Scandal was available for distribution long before 1956 (Schaefer, 60).

4. Eric Schaefer, Bold! Daring! Shocking! True! A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 99.

5. Although several sources date Violated's release as late 1953,

some if not all of the film may have been shot earlier. Most conspicuous is a location shot of Times Square at night, featuring marquees for A Streetcar Named Desire, starring Vivian Leigh and Marlon Brando, and Bagels and Yox, a live comedy revue, both of which opened in New York in late 1951.

6. Mottola's haunting, melancholy score bears remarkable similarity to another minimalist score, consisting of guitar and piano, composed by Hoyt Kurtain for Ron Ormond's Mesa of Lost Women (1953), and re-used in Edward D. Wood Jr.'s Jail Bait (1954).

7. Grady D. Turner, ed., NYC Sex: How New York City Transformed Sex in America (London: Scala, 2002), 54-55.

8. A 1958 Mishkin release, New Stars of Burlesque appears to be a feature comprised of several burlesque shorts spliced together (Schaefer, 381).

9. Schaefer, 307.

10. Eric Schaefer lists a film called Rock 'N Roll Burlesk [sic], circa 1955, which boasts a similar cast as Too Hot to Handle. Since Mishkin released Burlesque in Harlem as Rock & Roll Burlesque, it is quite conceivable that he actually released both films under the "Rock & Roll" moniker (Schaefer, 375).

11. Schaefer, 309.

12. Felicia Feaster and Bret Wood, Forbidden Fruit: the Golden Age of the Exploitation Film (Baltimore: Midnight Marquee Press, 1999), 62.

13. It seems somewhat ironic that the original films which eventually mutated into the 1959 release Hoodlum Girls (these being Gambling with Souls and Slaves in Bondage) were inspired by the 1936 investigation and conviction of "Lucky" Luciano on charges of "compulsory prostitution and conspiracy," who ran his illicit operation in the heart of New York City, probably a stone's throw from where this revisionist account of the affair was unspooling (Schaefer, 257).

14. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2001), 192.

15. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 58.

16. Mishkin.

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19. Ibid., 124.

20. John McCarty, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 75.

21. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 104.

22. McDonough, 121.

23. "World Theatre," available at http://www.cinematreasures.org/theaters/2664/ (accessed 04-16-2010).

24. Ibid.

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26. McDonough, 111.

27. Michael J. Bowen, liner notes, The Sexperts: Touched by Temptation, DVD, Retro Seduction Cinema, 2007.

28. Quarles, 124.

29. McDonough, 104.

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31. Josh Alan Friedman, Tales of Times Square (Portland: Feral House, 1993), 193.

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34. "World Theatre."

35. "Sleazoid Obits: Lew Mishkin," available at http://www.sleazoidexpress.com/mishkin.html (accessed 02-25-2010).

36. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 103-107.

37. The budget for Fight for Your Life has been quoted as $35,000 by Bill Landis, and $86,000 by Straw Weisman; either figure suggests that Mishkin, Endelson and company knew how to extract the most value from a budget when they cared enough to (Straw Weisman, audio commentary, Fight for Your Life, Blue Underground DVD release, 2004).

38. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 105.

39. "Sleazoid Obits: Lew Mishkin."

40. Ibid.

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7. Grant, 115.

8. Cunningham, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 133.

9. Grant, 162.

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11. Grant, 111; Williams, ed., 20.

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18. Cunningham, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 132.

19. Grant, 98.

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21. Ibid., 16.

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23. Margaret Cruikshank, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 156.

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25. Cruikshank, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 160.

26. Cunningham, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 126.

27. Cruikshank, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 158.

28. Ibid., 160.

29. Grant, 95.

30. "The Hippies," Scholastic Scope, December 7, 1967, 4-12.

31. Grant, 134.

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35. Victor Bondi and Peter C. Holloran, The Sexual Revolution, ed. Williams, 152.

36. Grant, 149.

37. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 77.

38. Ibid., 58.

39. Mike Quarles, Down and Dirty: Hollywood's Exploitation Filmmakers and Their Movies (Jefferson: McFarland, 1993), 122.

40. Ibid., 122-123.

41. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Breaking the Last Taboo of the Screen, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), 71.

42. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 141.

43. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 58.

44. McDonough, 133.

45. Ibid., 134.

46. Quarles, 124.

47. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 62.

48. McDonough, 136.

49. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #52, 1999, 38.

50. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 62.

51. McDonough, 136.

52. Ibid., 142.

53. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants, ed. McCarty, 71.

54. Ibid., 72.

55. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 62.

56. Eddie Muller and Daniel Faris, Grindhouse: The Forbidden World of "Adults Only" Cinema (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 95.

57. McDonough, 144, 154.

58. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 62.

59. Lucas, 39.

60. McDonough, 167.

61. Ibid., 141.

62. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59.

63. McDonough, 165.

64. Lucas, 43.

65. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59.

66. McDonough, 164.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid., 163.

69. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59.

70. Ibid.; Lucas, 43.

71. Lucas, 43; Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59.

72. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59.

73. McDonough, 159.

74. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 59-60.

75. McDonough, 159.

76. Lucas, 47.

77. Ibid.

78. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 60.

79. Ibid.

80. McDonough, 173.

81. Lucas, 39.

82. Anatomy of a Flipside: Part Two, How Do You Make a Flipside? http://film.thedigitalfix.com/con tent/id/75443,-accessed- 06-07-2012.

83. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Venus in Furs," in Deleuze, Masochism (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 145.

84. Ibid., 146.

85. Ibid., 159.

86. Ibid., 179.

87. Ibid., 269.

88. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 75.

89. McDonough, 207.

90. Sacher-Masoch, 271.

91. Grant, 4.

92. Stephen Mamber, Cinema Verit? in America: Studies in Uncon trolled Documentary (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974), 6.

93. Ibid., 7.

94. Ibid., 23.

95. Ibid., 5.

Chapter 8

1. Roses are an ubiquitous emblem in the films of Andy Milligan - most likely because he liked roses-but their existence offers symbolic meanings, as diffuse as the environments in which they occur; here, for instance, this winsome, iconic centerpiece of the harmonious family dining table stands in stark contrast to the ugly, malefic goings-on which have, and will, occur in this cursed domicile.

2. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 174.

3. According to Milligan, Magie Dominic's authentic screams during the abortion scene actually summoned the police to investigate (McDonough, 178).

4. According to Jimmy McDonough, an existing script for Seeds contains an either unfilmed, or filmed and excised, romantic subplot about Mathew and Buster (180).

5. McDonough, 183.

6. Although it would be convenient to say that Milligan was alone in bringing the shocking taboo of incest to the screen at this time, that would be inaccurate, as the sexploitation film field was aggressively toying with just such taboos during this period. In the same year of Seeds' release, for example, Russ Meyer released his magnificent box-office smash, Vixen (1968), which includes a scene wherein the title nymphomaniac seduces her brother. As in Seeds, the consummation of this act of moral transgression causes the female no perceivable grief or remorse, but causes the brother considerable anguish, leading to a hackneyed revenge scenario. Thematically

and stylistically, however, the two films (or filmmakers) could not be further apart. Milligan's problematic homosexuality imbues every frame of his films, in either overt or subtextual ways, whereas Meyer's brazen hyper-masculinity makes no mistake about his protagonists sexual leanings. As well, Meyer's superslick filming style successfully apes the look of much bigger-budget

Hollywood product, whereas Milligan's grungy little 16mm wonders look, as suggested elsewhere, like overwrought home-movie theatrics. Milligan is on record as stating that he felt Meyer's films were "too glossy," with "no substance" (McDonough, 185). While the latter statement is demonstrably untrue, as Meyer's films are thematically rich, Milligan surely knew whereof he spoke in terms of the Meyers films' exceedingly "corporate" look, a style which could not be in any way confused with a Milligan production.

7. Regarding this notion of antagonistic moments in family life captured via home movies, which is the structural conceit in Seeds (and perhaps other films in Milligan's verite period), the closest thing that contemporary cinema has come up with is a very strange film by Andrew Jarecki, Capturing the Friedmans (2003), which purports to document an actual New York family in decline, using a combination of the family's own home movies (actually early videotape footage) along with reconstructed scenes and interviews with concerned parties. Although some aspects of the film are highly suspect, and seem manipulated in order to draw certain foregone conclusions, there is an abundance of what must be authentic home videotape footage of the Friedmans, which includes some quite harsh arguments and accusations, subjects and moments which are not normally captured (or at least preserved) in the typical family's home-movie project. Capturing the Friedmans may thus stand as the closest thing to a documentary incarnation of an Andy Milligan movie as we shall ever see.

8. McDonough, 201.

9. Ibid., 183.

10. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 61.

Chapter 9

1. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 143.

2. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 63.

3. This scenario was inspired originally by a 1927 novel by J. B Priestley, The Benighted.

4. Milligan maintained that his house on Staten Island where The Ghastly Ones, and other productions were filmed, was in fact haunted (McDonough, 154).

5. McDonough, 151.

Chapter 10

1. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995),72.

2. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 195.

3. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 65.

Chapter 11

1. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #53, 1999, pp. 36-49.

2. Robert L. Mack, ed., Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), ix.

3. Ibid., xvi.

4. Ibid., xvii.

5. Ibid., xxxv.

6. As for the 2007 Tim Burton musical, it too radically departs from the source novel, due to its reliance on the Stephen Sondheim theatrical production, which was itself inspired by the 1973 Christopher Bond adaptation. The most conspicuous revision is the addition of a tragic back-story to both Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett, which has the disastrous effect of making them both sympathetic characters, their heinous present crimes largely justified as revenge against earlier conspiracies. In the original novel (and not incidentally in Butchers), Todd and Lovett are evil, despicable villains, in no way redeemed by their circumstances or previous history. They become, then, classic horror characters, representing humanity at its most base and bestial. In the Burton musical, Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter turn Todd and Lovett into dreary, charismatic, "kewpie-doll" goth stereotypes, lovable even in their perfidy, and as far removed from the spirit of the original characters as imaginable. As well, Mrs. Lovett's hopelessly bourgeois dream of a middle-class marriage to Todd is the complete antithesis to the story arc of the novel, and certainly to Milligan's vicious anti-heterosexual diatribe.

7. According to Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, after Sondheim's musical opened on Broadway, Bloodthirsty Butchers was re-released to grindhouses under the name Sweeney Todd, an intriguing claim which remains unverified (Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express [New York: Fireside Books, 2002], 48).

8. The character of Tobias Ragg in Butchers is a hilarious revision of the character as seen in the source novel, an innocent urchin who serves as Todd's abused, terrified intern; here, Tobias has become a grown-up, psychopathic sexual predator.

9. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 213.

to. Corky may also remind us of the theatrical tradition of the Harlequin, that stock character from Italy's Commedia dell-a rte and elsewhere. This abstract, athletic, quick-to-action character, half demon and half romantic hero, sporting a ludicrous mask which identifies him as non-human, distinguished himself by an almost supernatural ability to appear at the fortuitous moment, intervening in human affairs both to salvage and sabotage; Corky's function in Butchers appears to adhere to the latter duty, and his vivid description of an "act" he intends to resurrect, which sounds largely acrobatic in nature, seems to support this allusion.

11. McDonough, 209.

12. In his fascinating Film Hieroglyphics: Ruptures in Classical Cinema, Tom Conley ponders the significance of writing in classical cinema-the existence of "ideograms" such as credits, signage, letters, and other examples of written language appearing in the film frame or, as he puts it, "the presence of alphabetical and iconic writing within the field of the moving image." Even (perhaps especially) if these "hieroglyphics" fall into the film "by chance," their presence invites interpretation, adding another layer to the comprehension of the narrative text, and to Conley offering a "hidden" rhetoric to be pondered and decoded - and Milligan's playful "WEENEY" surely invites such consideration. (Tom Conley, Film Hieroglyphics: Ruptures in Classical Cinema, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991. ix.)

13. Kevin John Bozelka, "Exploitation Films and Success: The Half-Told Melodramas of Andy Milligan," eds. Robert G. Weiner and John Cline. Cinema Inferno: Celluloid Explosions from the Cultural Margins (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 184.

14. McDonough, 211.

15. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 66.

16. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 74.

Chapter 12

1. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 67.

2. Tellingly, Guru's "church" is repeatedly referred to as "the prison," accentuating not only this organization's main social function, but also its overall historical purpose as a diabolical enslaver of men's minds.

3. Giles Deleuze, Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 43.

4. This scene also illustrates Milligan's knack for creating a believable verisimilitude out of meager resources- in the upper levels of the church rectory, Milligan conveys the ambiance of stained-glass church windows by applying squares of pink and red tissue paper to sections of what looks to be an industrial-type factory window frame. If one studies the effect too closely, the deceit is evident and the illusion falls apart, but as the scene uses the windows as mere background, this casual, almost subliminal attempt at atmosphere is effective indeed.

5. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 218.

6. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #53, 1999, 47.

7. McDonough, 218.

8. Boxoffice, March 1, 1971, 4367.

Chapter 13

1. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Nether world of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 209.

2. Mike Quarles, Down and Dirty: Hollywood's Exploitation Filmmakers and Their Movies (Jefferson:-McFarland., 1993), 127.

3. McDonough, 221.

4. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 65.

5. McDonough, 209.

6. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 75.

7. According to Milligan, this speech was inserted at the last minute, translated verbatim from comments made by Curtis Elliot, father of Cinemedia owner Leslie Elliott, during a contentious conversation which ultimately ended Milligan's partnership with Cinemedia. One hopes that this wasn't the case, as the speech is integral to the narrative of Body and it would be disappointing to discover it was merely a felicitous afterthought (McDonough, 209).

8. John Stanley Revenge of the Creature Features Movie Guide, 3d ed. (Pacifica: Creatures at Large Press, 1988), 34.

9. Michael Weldon, The Psychotronic Encyclopedia of Film (New York: Ballantine Books, 1983), 79.

10. Gay, 75.

11. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #53, 1999, 39.

12. McDonough, 209.

13. Boxoffice, March 1, 1971, 4367.

14. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 64.

Chapter 14

1. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #53, 1999, 44.

2. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 67.

3. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 345.

4. Robert Patrick, personal correspondence.

5. McDonough, 215.

6. Ibid., 216.

7. Lucas, 45.

8. McDonough, 231.

9. Lucas, 43.

Chapter 15

1. Another sign of Mishkin's disinterest in and/or lack of comprehension of this film is the truly awful poster art he came up with. Eschewing the bold, engaging photo collage style Mishkin had used on every previous Milligan release, for The Man with Two Heads Mishkin opted instead for primitive, cartoon-like illustrations, which trivialize the advertised product. The main illustration depicts a goofy head, half-man, half-beast, split in two. A smaller illustration below shows one man standing directly behind another at a laboratory table, badly attempting the illusion of a two-headed beast. Even devout Milligan fans find this sacrilegious, insulting piece of art hard to take, as it seems to exemplify Mishkin's disdain for this production, and its maker.

2. Robert Louis Stevenson, Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Norton Critical Editions), ed. Katherine Linehan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 49.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., xiii.

5. Ibid., 28.

6. Ibid., 9.

7. Ibid., 53.

8. Jenni Calder, "Stevenson's Scottish Devil Tales," Robert Louis Stevenson, Strange Case ofDr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Norton Critical Editions), ed. Katherine Linehan (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 127.

9. Stevenson, 49.

10. Ibid., 50.

11. Ibid., 51.

12. Ibid., 20.

13. Ibid., 51.

14. Ibid., 61.

15. Ibid., 150.

16. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo." Video Watchdog #53, 1999, pp. 36-49.

17. One may recall that in The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, Milligan also showcased a courageous, intellectual young woman attending medical school (and with roots in Scotland!), a rare thing during the time period which gives both films a feminist underpinning; Milligan seemed determined to portray the struggle of women entering into professional competition with men during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

This profeminist partiality also figures in his choices for some of his theatrical productions.

18. Mary Ann also reminds Jekyll that her brother, Oliver, wants him to critique a speech he has written, before he presents it before a medical conference in Scotland. As in The Rats are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, Scotland is referenced as a location of exotic, cutting-edge medical education; one wonders if this maybe a veiled allusion to Scotland's long and notorious history as a center for occult organizations sponsoring various alchemical projects, such as the world-famous Freemasons.

19. Stevenson, 203.

20. Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse (New York: Free Press, 1997), 66.

21. Ibid., 67.

22. Ibid.

23. John Stanley, Revenge of the Creature Features Movie Guide, 3d ed. (Pacifica: Creatures at Large, 1988), 206.

24. Michael Weldon, The Psychotronic Video Guide (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 456.

25. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 64.

26. Lucas, 42.

27. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 75.

Chapter 16

1. Thanks to Don Icolari, and his marvelous Staten Island website, http://walkingistransportation.blog spot.com, for identifying this historic location.

2. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 69-70.

3. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 72.

4. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #53, 1999, 47.

5. Gay, 72.

6. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 73.

Chapter 17

1. In the ancient art known as palingenesis, alchemists were purportedly able to resurrect a being destroyed by fire via the ritual manipulation of the ashes; one prominent anecdote involves notorious occult magi Kircher, who revived a rose from its ashes, with the Queen of Sweden as witness, circa 1687.

2. John Wallowitch (1926- 2007), in his only known film appearance, was a popular songwriter and entertainer, considered by many a successor to Noel Coward, performing in cabarets and night clubs for many years with his partner, Bertram Ross. Several of his almost 2,000 song compositions are still being performed today by artists such as Blossom Dearie, Dixie Carter, Shirley Horn and Tony Bennett.

3. The man sitting in the lobby is Walter Kent, Blood's producer.

4. Gertrude Himmelfarb, Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), 200.

5. Ibid., 45.

6. Ibid., 77.

7. Ibid., 82

8. Ibid., 224.

9. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 76.

10. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 73.

Chapter 18

1. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #54, 1999, pp. 35-45, 37.

2. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 241.

3. Tim Lucas claims that Legacy was shot in 16mm, but it is listed in Jimmy McDonough's Milligan filmography as having been shot in 35mm, which sounds likelier as Milligan had access to 35mm equipment since the shooting of Guru, the Mad Monk some years earlier, and Legacy boasts a "bigger" look than earlier 16mm Milligan productions (McDonough, 342).

4. Sharon Illoway, "Shaw Play Will Entertain, Staten Island Advance, August 20, 1974, p. 23.

5. McDonough, 242.

6. Lucas, 37.

7. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 77.

Chapter 19

1. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 247.

2. Walter L. Gay, The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 76.

3. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 76.

4. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #54, 1999, pp. 35-45.

5. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 75.

6. McDonough, 245.

7. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 75.

8. McDonough 255.

9. Landis and Clifford, Sleazoid Express, 76.

10. McDonough, 255.

11. Lucas, 39.

Chapter 20

1. Jimmy McDonough, The Ghastly One: The Sex-Gore Netherworld of Filmmaker Andy Milligan (Chicago: A Cappella Press, 2001), 262.

2. Tim Lucas, "Andy Milligan: Horror's Unwanted Weirdo," Video Watchdog #54, 1999, pp. 35 -45.

3. Walter L. Gay The Sleaze Merchants: Adventures in Exploitation Filmmaking, ed. John McCarty (New York: St. Martin's Griffin), 1995, 78. Also Lucas, 40, Landis, 76.

4. In his biography of Milligan, McDonough claims that it was actually he, and not Borske, who played Frankie during the incendiary climax-and that

he almost burned to death due to Milligan's notorious carelessness with combustibles (McDonough, 269).

5. Mary Shelley, Frankenstein (New York: Lancer Books, 1964), 259.

6. Ibid., 142.

7. Ibid., 262.

8. McDonough, 271.

9. Ibid., 272.

10. Ibid., 275.

11. Ibid., 200.

12. Bill Landis and Michelle Clifford, Sleazoid Express (New York: Fireside Books, 2002), 77.

13. McDonough, 295.

Chapter 21

1. To a growing number of independent film fans, a film becomes worthy in direct proportion to its production budget. It might even be argued that spending $50 million on another generic Hollywood blockbuster, in an economy where many citizens suffer egregiously, is something akin to a corporate crime, as this tremendous sum could have been more constructively used elsewhere -either in promoting neglected, under-funded cultural projects or (god forbid) used towards worthy social welfare programs.

2. 'John Masefield, - William Shakespeare (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1964), 123.

3. Michael Seuphor, Abstract Painting: Fifty Years of Accomplishment from Kandinsky to Jackson Pollack (New York: Dell, 1964), 43.

4. As discussed in Chapter 2, the main legacy of Milligan's wild experiments with theatrical melodrama verite is the phenomenon of the television "reality show," purporting to chronicle the behind-the scenes drama of actual couples, families, and other social groupings. As far as the narrative legacy of Milligan, little is found in contemporary culture, sans the occasional study of a violent dysfunctional family found on crime television crime series such as The X Files and Criminal Minds. Anthology drama series such as these often feature one

or more episodes in which a clinically deranged family unit is the progenitor of gruesome murders, with incest often alluded to as well. Certainly, the films of John Waters share Milligan's spirit as well, featuring comically dysfunctional families in overwrought pulp melodramas which, at their best (Female Trouble, 1974; Polyester, 1981; Serial Mom, 1994) succeed as grisly, surreal social satires. More recently, a British film, Mum & Dad (2008, d: Steven Sheil), brilliantly captures Milligan's primary motif, that of the average family as a sado-masochistic torture chamber for its imprisoned children.

5. The trope of the dysfunctional family does crop up periodically in contemporary cinema, albeit invariably watered down to a relatively "toothless" neurotic clan in mainstream productions such as Interiors (1978, d: Woody Allen), Ordinary People (1980, d: Robert Redford), What's Eating Gilbert Grape? (1993, d: Lasse Hallstrom), and American Beauty (1999, d: Sam Mendes. John Masefield, William Shakespeare (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1964).

6. Gertrude Himmelfarb, Marriage and Morals Among the Victorians. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001. 137.

7. An interesting study could be launched focusing solely on the subject of class warfare in the Milligan films, as servants and employers are so often thrown together, fighting both in alliance against a common enemy and, more often, against each other - these battles serving as useful allegories to

similar caste antagonism occurring in Victorian (and to a lesser degree, contemporary) society.

8. Andrea Dworkin, Intercourse New York: Free Press, 1987), 119.

9. Ibid., 118.

10. Germaine Greer in Linda Grant, Sexing the Millennium: Women and the Sexual Revolution (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 8.

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*A word about queer theory: at first blush, it might appear that a discussion of Andy Milligan via the analytical discipline of queer theory would be fruitful. Queer theory, which first established itself as a viable analytical style in the 1990s, is influenced by deconstructionism, feminism, and other disciplines. According to Ellis Hanson, queer theory "submits the various social codes and rhetorics of sexuality (in film) to a close reading and rigorous analysis that reveal their incoherence, instability, and artificiality." Further, it is "a rejection of the compulsory heterosexual code of masculine men desiring feminine women." Milligan's films in and of themselves reject the "compulsory heterosexual code of masculine men desiring feminine women," and further obscure and redefine gender in ways which were then radical. Milligan certainly presented heterosexual couples in the thrall of "normal" heterosexual desire, but simultaneously ambushed and abused these liaisons, often with great prejudice. While a discussion of Milligan via queer theory might be advantageous for some intrepid author, it is not within the scope of this project. Above quotations are from Ellis Hanson, ed., Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 4.